

A. LUNACHARSKY

BY A. YERMAKOV



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The revolutionary ferment in Russia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the 1917 Revolution, and the building of the world's first socialist society brought to the fore a remarkable group of thinkers, revolutionaries and organizers. In the front ranks of this Leninist guard, these men of great ideas and character, universal interests and encyclopaedic learning, stood Anatoli Vasilevich Lunacharsky. Revolutionary and scholar, writer and art critic, brilliant publicist and orator, he became the first People's Commissar for Education in Soviet Russia. His engaging personality, militant temperament, genuine democratic spirit and interest in other people, from the worker to the scientist and famous artist, his intellectuality and familiarity with world art, his good taste, delicacy and tact did much to rally the intelligentsia around the Bolsheviks and the Soviet government, and draw them into the work of building a new culture.

Lenin made no secret of his fond admiration for Lunacharsky. "Such a rare, richly endowed nature! I am very fond of him, as you know. A splendid comrade!" said Lenin.

The great French writer and humanist Romain Rolland paid a warm tribute to Lunacharsky in July 1917, before the latter had been

appointed People's Commissar for Education. "How I wish we had a Lunacharsky in France, someone with the same understanding, the same sincerity and clarity concerning politics, art and everything that is vital!"

These were the words of a man to whom writers, artists, musicians, journalists, people of diverse views and faiths all over the world paid homage in those years, just as sometime earlier they had made pilgrimages to Yasnaya Polyana to pay homage to Leo Tolstoy.

And here are a few lines from the letters of the great Russian proletarian writer Maxim Gorky to Lunacharsky. "Haven't you ever thought, dear Anatoli Vasilevich, of writing your memoirs? What a wonderful book that would make!" Or again: "You have lived a hard but splendid life, and you have done great work. For a long time, practically all your life, you have marched at the side of Lenin and our greatest, most brilliant comrades. . . . Your book about your life would fill an objective need."

In such words of praise did Lunacharsky's most illustrious contemporaries speak of him and his work.

The Revolutionary

Anatoli Vasilevich Lunacharsky was born on November 23, 1875, in the Ukrainian town of Poltava. His father was Alexander Ivanovich Antonov, an important official in the tsarist civil service, being an Actual State Councillor (general's rank), but he bore the name of his mother's

first husband, Vasili Lunacharsky, from whom she was not divorced. Anatoli's early childhood years were spent in Nizhny-Novgorod (now Gorky) and Kursk, where Alexander Antonov headed the Chamber of Controls. Antonov was a man of democratic leanings who did not hide his sympathy for the "left" ideas of that time. To him the boy owed his early anti-religious and anti-monarchistic sentiments and his interest in the realistic democratic Russian literature of the 19th century.

His family was a happy one; a friendly atmosphere prevailed, and there were often lively and bold discussions. But all that changed after his father's death, when he was about nine years of age. His mother, who was gay and witty, fell a prey to depression and hysteria, and turned their home into a typical landowners' domicile, frequented by the usual hangers-on and gossipers, all of which estranged the boy from his mother. After a brief stay in Moscow, where his father had died following an unsuccessful operation, the family moved to Kiev and Anatoli entered a gymnasium. He studied there from 1887 to 1895, making a poor showing and even repeating one class. He did not care for the school whose programme was based on monarchistic and religious principles, and he neglected his lessons. Failing to understand the reason for his lack of interest, his teachers pronounced him capable but lazy.

At home, however, he applied himself to his studies seriously, and with enthusiasm. He studied German and French,¹ took music lessons, went

¹ In an application form which he filled in, in 1930, Lunacharsky stated that he spoke French, German and Italian fluently and translated from those languages, and also that he had a reading knowledge of English and Spanish.

to the theatre and concerts, and avidly read novels and books on literature. He was interested in other people, and fond of nature. But until he was fifteen and was allowed to wear spectacles (being nearsighted by birth), he avoided other boys of his own age and preferred to stay at home, entertaining his younger brother with his stories in which he let his imagination roam.

At the age of thirteen he turned eagerly for the first time to the then illegal books of Friedrich Engels and Karl Kautsky. In his fourteenth and fifteenth years he studied the first volume of Marx's *Capital* "in and out", as he put it. This was the only volume of Marx's work, and for that matter the only book among the Marxist classics, that had been translated into Russian. Anatoli showed a deep interest in philosophy at an early age. He read John Stuart Mill's *System of Logic* carefully and made many notes on his copy. Then Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer became his mentors. The works of the Russian positivist V. V. Lesevich of Kiev sparked a keen interest in German positivism and the psychological and philosophical ideas of Richard Avenarius. It should be noted here that Marxism was as yet little known in Russia. The young Lunacharsky mistook the positivism of Avenarius and Mach for that materialism which is the closest to the ideas of Marx and can be revised in the spirit of his teachings. It was a mistake Lunacharsky did not correct until much later.

In the early 1890s a social democratic movement emerged among the young people of Kiev, mostly students, and their first organization took shape. Lunacharsky, then fifteen years old, joined the illegal organization formed of the pupils of his gymnasium and, as a well-read youth and

debating enthusiast, soon began to play a prominent role in it. At first this organization, whose membership came to include pupils of many other gymnasia in Kiev, made education in the social sciences its main goal. In its study circles young people discussed the writings of the Russian revolutionary democrats A. Herzen, N. Chernyshevsky, N. Dobrolyubov and D. Pissarev, and of the prominent Russian populist and revolutionary P. Lavrov. Its classes in political economy based their programme on various eclectic courses as well as the illegal social-democratic literature. From time to time the members held meetings on the banks of the Dnieper, going there by boat. Recalling those meetings years later, Lunacharsky said that their all-night trips on the Dnieper were the students' favourite way of getting together for a friendly exchange of ideas and of doing political work among gymnasium pupils.

His really serious political work began when Lunacharsky was seventeen and a pupil in the 7th year of the 8-year gymnasium. He went over to practical revolutionary activity by joining the Kiev railway and handicraft workers' circle and acting as a teacher and propagandist among the members. The first articles written by Russian Marxists, among them G. V. Plekhanov, were just coming out. Lunacharsky told the workers and craftsmen what he had learned from his wide reading and from the illegal literature then appearing. He wrote his first articles for the hectographed social-democratic newspaper. And engrossed as he was in his own political education and that of the workers, he did not desert his old loves—music, art, and literature.

So, at an early age, the features of the man

who came to be known in his mature years for his erudition and gifts as an orator and revolutionary began to take shape.

In his graduation certificate his mark for conduct was "4", an indication that the school authorities were aware of his revolutionary ideas. A "4" in conduct, when everybody was expected to have a "5", was an obstacle to university matriculation in Russia, but by that time the young man had made up his mind to go to Zurich, Switzerland, in order to continue his study of scientific socialism under the Russian Marxist P. Axelrod, one of the founders of the Emancipation of Labour group, to whom he had a letter of introduction, and also to study under Avenarius, with whose ideas he was much taken. To overcome his mother's objections to his leaving home, he exaggerated the difficulty of entering a Russian university. In 1895 he left for Zurich, there to enter the university and simultaneously to join the students' social-democratic organization in that city.

* * *

As was the custom then, Lunacharsky drew up his own programme of studies. His desk was piled high with books on philosophy, psychology, history, sociology, political economy, jurisprudence, the history of religion, literature, art, and even anatomy and physiology. He immersed himself in the study of Marx, Engels, Schopenhauer, Fichte, Schelling, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Spencer, Diderot, and Helvétius. These were the years when he came to know and talked and argued with Plekhanov, and Axelrod, with the famous Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich, and the German So-

cial-Democrat and internationalist Rosa Luxemburg, with the outstanding socialist and internationalist Jean Jaures, and with Paul Lafargue and his wife Laura Marx. Each new friend was an episode in his biography, and each new encounter a further step towards the attainment of truth. Throughout his life there had been meetings with the most interesting men and women of his time, discussions, arguments, and books and more books.

Both during his lifetime and after his death, people talked about his extraordinary erudition, and his ability to deliver impromptu lectures and speak knowledgeably on practically any subject. According to one eyewitness, he was once asked by Lenin during an informal gathering of revolutionaries to give a talk on the devil. To the surprise and delight of the company, he spoke for over an hour on the image of the devil in the Middle Ages, in 18th- and 19th-century world literature, and in folk art.

On another occasion—this was after the revolution—the prominent Georgian theatre director Amaglobeli, then vice-president of the State Academy of Aesthetics, persuaded the People's Commissar for Education to give a talk the same evening at the Academy on a difficult philosophical problem of aesthetics. Lest Lunacharsky should change his mind, Amaglobeli did not leave his side all that day. Lunacharsky was not relieved of his ministerial duties until evening and on the way to the Academy he sat back, looking very tired, and said nothing. When the time came he got up and spoke for ninety minutes delivering a brilliant talk which evoked an ovation from his audience of writers and scholars. Amaglobeli was amazed. "It's unbelievable!" he exclaimed. "You had had no chance to prepare the talk at all!"

To which Lunacharsky replied in all seriousness: "I have been preparing myself for that talk all my life." He meant it; he had been hard at it, amassing knowledge ever since he was a boy, and he had a knack of mobilizing his knowledge at a moment's notice.

In 1896, in Zurich, Lunacharsky was warmly received by P. Axelrod. A friendship sprang up between the two men which was broken, for political reasons, only after the passage of many years. The young man became a frequent and welcome guest in the home of Axelrod, of whom he was later to speak as his spiritual mentor who had whetted his interest in Marxism, broadened his knowledge, and instilled in him a taste for political tactics. Axelrod was sharply critical of Lunacharsky's attempt to reconcile Marx and Spencer, being an opponent of Spencer's view of society as an evolutionary organism; he helped Lunacharsky to rid himself of certain erroneous notions and to partially clarify his Marxist world outlook.

With respect to Avenarius, however, things went worse. The Russian student, who was attending Avenarius' course in psychology as well as his two seminars on philosophy and bio-psychology, thought that he had found acceptable grounds for his philosophical outlook in Avenarius' writings, lectures and seminars. He attached the greatest importance to those aspects of Avenarius' teaching which provided a basis for his biological theory of evaluation. Avenarius' "elements" and "symbols", his law of bio-psychic economy in cognition and aesthetics, his theory of affects—all that struck him, he subsequently recalled, as a revelation. He felt that he had discovered the truth and succeeded in reconciling positivism and Marx-

ist philosophy. Many years later Lunacharsky was to speak of Avenarius' philosophy as deceptive and confusing and admit that Lenin was right to have defended "the materialism of Marx against all the deceptive, slippery, involved systems called positivism (E. Mach, R. Avenarius, etc.)" which do not and cannot have anything in common with dialectical materialism.

In Zurich Lunacharsky struck up an acquaintance with the first Russian Marxist, G. Plekhanov, engaging the acknowledged dean of Russian Marxism, himself a brilliant debater and man of great learning and talent, in many an argument and displaying his usual passion and fearlessness in the defense of his own ideas.

Plekhanov's criticism of the empirio-criticism of Avenarius, like that of Axelrod before him, did not have the desired effect on their disciple. On the other hand, Lunacharsky was greatly influenced by Plekhanov's discerning criticism of Schopenhauer, whose works he was studying at the time, and above all by Plekhanov's views on Hegel, Fichte and Schelling with whose works he was not sufficiently acquainted. Spurred on by his arguments and talks with Plekhanov, Lunacharsky buried himself in the writings of these great idealists which left an ineradicable imprint on his outlook and his whole personality. He also turned now for the first time to a serious study of Feuerbach.

To his meetings with Plekhanov he also owed his interest in the works of Helvétius and Diderot. But that was not all. As he himself said, "By that time I had conceived a keen interest in the problem of art in relation to the history of culture. Plekhanov acquainted me with the wealth of material he had collected on the subject and

his striking ideas on it, which served to corroborate the Marxist approach to the history of art. Many of the ideas Plekhanov and I discussed at that time, many of the conclusions I drew from his words were to become my lasting convictions."

* * *

This intense programme of work in Zurich was interrupted by the serious illness of his brother Platon. Lunacharsky left for Nice early in 1896, looked after his brother, helped his family, and accompanied them to Rheims and then Paris. And all this time he continued his reading, now concentrated on the study of the history of religion and art. He began to give talks on these subjects in the Russian colony in Paris, and they were well received. In Paris he made the acquaintance of the eminent Russian revolutionary, philosopher and founder of the subjective Russian school of sociology P. Lavrov, and engaged him in discussions in which he defended the importance of Marxism for the liberation of Russia. In 1896 he made a short trip to Russia, his term of military service being due, but was exempted from service on the grounds of near-sightedness. He returned to his sick brother's side in Paris, where he soon received an official notification from Axelrod that he had been chosen to represent the foreign organization of the Russian Social-Democrats in Paris.

In 1898 (August or September), Lunacharsky returned to Russia with his brother and his family. His brother had recovered from his illness. All the work he had done before had been a serious political school for the young student, but his real revolutionary christening came in 1898 and 1899.

Members of the Social-Democratic Committee had just been arrested in Moscow. Lunacharsky joined Lenin's sister, A. I. Yelizarova, and several other comrades in setting up another Moscow Committee. It began gradually to function.

Then, suddenly—it was betrayed. Many years later it was established that A. Serebryakova, to whom Lunacharsky on his return had brought a letter from P. Axelrod and through whom he was to have contacted Moscow's Social-Democrats, was a paid informer of the tsarist secret service operating under the aliases of "Subbotina", "Mamasha" and "Tuz" ("Ace"). She was responsible for the disclosure of practically all the revolutionary organizations in Moscow during the last decade of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th.

Twenty-six persons, among them Lunacharsky, were arrested in the middle of April, 1899. They were accused of conducting criminal propaganda among the workers of the city of Moscow. Under interrogation Lunacharsky conducted himself adroitly and with dignity. Search of his quarters produced no incriminating evidence, as the police themselves admitted, and he was released from prison at the end of April and allowed to go to Kiev where his mother resided. As the investigation proceeded, however, new facts were brought to light which indicated that Lunacharsky had a bigger role in the case than was a first thought. On May 22, the chief of the Moscow Gubernia police demanded his rearrest, which took place in Kiev two days later, upon which he was taken to Moscow and placed in solitary confinement in the Taganka Prison. He was kept there until October 8, and then allowed to return to the Ukraine.

Those months in solitary confinement were not

wasted. He learned to read English and pursued his study of the history of philosophy. In his memoirs he recalled that he suffered from insomnia, often for weeks at a time going without sleep. But intellectually the months in prison proved "one of the high points" of his life: "I had every opportunity to order books and spent all the money my mother sent me on them. I read a whole library of books and wrote many poems, short stories and articles... By this time my philosophical outlook was fully formed."

The investigation of the "Moscow case" was completed in April, 1900. Lunacharsky was to have been placed under open surveillance for a period of one year, but this verdict was revoked and he was implicated in a new investigation by the Kiev police.

What was the new "Kiev case" against Lunacharsky?

On the evening of April 29, 1900, Lunacharsky gave a talk on "Henrik Ibsen as Moralist" before a group of students in a private flat. The Norwegian dramatist had many warm admirers among the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the century. But the police suspected an illegal political gathering and surrounded the house where Lunacharsky was giving his talk. Fifty-five persons were arrested and twenty-three of them were held for investigation. This investigation did not confirm the original suspicion that the meeting on April 29 was "a gathering with criminal aims". Nevertheless Lunacharsky was kept in the Kiev prison for a month and seventeen days, at the end of which time he was told to select his place of exile, exclusive of any of the university towns. His choice fell on Kaluga because of its proximity to Moscow. On June 30, he departed

for Kaluga under police surveillance, there to await the decision on the "Moscow case". It was to be almost two years before it was handed down.

Life in Kaluga, as he often said, proved quite an important phase of his political biography. There he met and became friendly with such prominent Russian Social-Democrats as A. Bogdanov (Malinovsky), V. Bazarov-Rudnev, and I. Skvortsov-Stepanov. He shared with Bogdanov and Bazarov a lively interest in the philosophical side of Marxism and a desire to strengthen its gno-seological, aesthetic and ethical aspects. Together with Skvortsov-Stepanov he began to conduct propaganda in the circles for teachers and students, and among the workers of the Kaluga Railway Depot and at the Linen Factory, whose owner, D. Goncharov, an educated man with progressive views, had introduced the 8-hour day and profit-sharing by the workers. Through the workers of the Linen Factory the two propagandists sought to sway the workers of other factories towards the ideas of the Social-Democrats. Understandably their activities aroused the ire of the police, the mayor of the town and the owners of the other factories.

On May 15, 1902, N. Muraviev, the Minister of Justice, sent a communication to V. Pleve, the Minister of Internal Affairs, stating: "On the basis of the report I have submitted to the Emperor concerning the circumstances of the case of Anatoli Lunacharsky, a member of the gentry, accused of a crime against the state, His Highness has this 15th day of May, 1902, ordered a formal investigation of said Anatoli Lunacharsky, to the end of securing his exile under open surveillance in Vyatka Gubernia for two years. It is my ho-

nour to inform your Excellency of the Monarch's will. . ."

It so happened that Lunacharsky was staying in Vologda at that time, having gone there on February 2, 1902, at the invitation of the exiled A. Bogdanov. His request to be allowed to remain in Vologda on the grounds of illness was granted.

The two years of exile in Vologda were in all respects a very special period in Lunacharsky's life.

After "an acquaintance of three days", he proposed to Bogdanov's sister Anna Alexandrovna Malinovskaya, and on September 1, 1902, they were married in Vologda. Lunacharsky was 26 at the time, and his bride was 19. Anna Alexandrovna, Lunacharsky's first wife, was a true friend in all their twenty years together, a friend who shared all his joys and sorrows.

There were many interesting and colourful people among the political exiles, and first of all Bogdanov himself. A physician by profession he became a revolutionary who had participated actively in the Social-Democratic organizations in Tula, Kharkov, Tver (now the town of Kalinin) and Kaluga, and was the author of the well-known books *A Short Course of Economic Science* (1897) and *Basic Elements of a Historical View of Nature* (1899). It was Bogdanov who helped Lunacharsky to understand the internal dissension following the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), this led Lunacharsky to take the side of the majority (Bolsheviks) led by Lenin. And it was Bogdanov who told Lenin about the young revolutionary and talented publicist. Lenin's interest was aroused and he subsequently made Lunacharsky a mem-

ber of the editorial staff of the Bolshevik newspaper *Vpered* (*Forward*) which was published abroad. Common interests and personal ties were to strengthen the political and philosophical bond between Bogdanov and Lunacharsky in the coming years.

A frequent speaker at the meetings of the Vologda colony of exiles was B. Savinkov (V. Ropshin), future leader of the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries (SR), an organizer of terroristic acts (the assassination of Minister Pleve, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich and others), and a decadent writer who after the October Revolution became an enemy of Soviet rule. Savinkov spoke at these meetings against the Social-Democrats, and many were the times when Lunacharsky crossed swords with the "king of adventurists".

A. Remizov, who was later to become a well-known writer, was also among the exiles. So was an old acquaintance of Lunacharsky's, the philosopher N. Berdyaev, who had gone over from legal Marxism (officially tolerated), through Kantianism and subjective idealism, to positions of religious mysticism. The two clashed immediately: "A great many lectures and talks were delivered in Vologda at that time. One of the best speakers was Nikolai Alexandrovich Berdyaev, who had just begun the transition from an idealistically tainted Marxism to the shadows of mysticism, from which he plunged straight into the night of the philosophical rationalization of Russian Orthodoxy. Of course, this evolution of his did not go unnoticed, but the eloquence of his speech and his great erudition charmed the exiles and the young people surrounding them. I had no choice from the very first but to speak out very sharply against Berdyaev. As I remember, I was quite

successful for his influence on our circle weakened perceptibly. Berdyaev himself, often as I invited him to attend my talks and give me an argument, never turned up."

One of Lunacharsky's first important articles was "The Tragedy of Life and White Magic" (1902). It summed up the talks he had given at Vologda against the views of Berdyaev and S. Bulgakov, who had undergone the same evolution from pseudo-Marxism to Russian Orthodoxy and mysticism.

Before going into Lunacharsky's writings, which now for the first time began to yield such brilliant results at Vologda, a word should be added about Lunacharsky's activity as a revolutionary propagandist which once again got him into trouble with the police. His speeches at the gatherings of the exiles, his meetings and talks with students, his contacts with the workers of the Vologda State Wine Stores who began to show signs of unrest under his influence, did not escape the attention of the police—all this prompted the Governor to demand his transfer from Vologda to the backward provincial town of Totma. The order was issued on February 15, 1903, but Lunacharsky refused to comply with it, whereupon he was taken there forcibly by the police. He fell ill on the way, and returned to Vologda by himself upon recovering, but was escorted back to Totma. Repeating the attempt to return to Vologda he was arrested on the way there, and thrown into prison at Kadnikov for a few days, sharing a cell with criminals from whom he caught the scabies. On arriving in Totma on March 31 he had a severe attack of erysipelas. Under the care of his wife, who had followed him at once to Totma, he soon recovered. But Anna Alexandrovna came

down with typhus in the last month of pregnancy, as a result of which they lost their first child.

Yet Lunacharsky always looked back on their stay in Totma as a happy and fruitful time for him, brightened by the beauties of the northern scene, their few but sincerely devoted friends, their happy life together, filled with intellectual work and the reading of more and more new books—and best of all, the opportunity to write a great deal and even to be published.

During his exile in Vologda he published about fifty articles, reviews, commentaries and translations in the Russian press. Among them were his tribute to Maurice Maeterlinck (1902), and the articles "On the Artist in General and Certain Artists in Particular" (1903), "Fate Knocks" (1903), "N. Lenau and His Philosophical Poems", and "Principles of a Positive Aesthetics" (1904) and a translation of Lenau's "Faust" (1904). A collection of the best articles of the Vologda period was published under the title *Critical and Polemical Essays* (1905). All that helped to make Lunacharsky quite well known, and the editors of most of the left democratic and revolutionary journals began to solicit his contributions.

For Lunacharsky, the 1890s and the early 1900s were years marked by contradictory inner process of working out a Marxist world outlook while continuing to entertain neo-positivist philosophical views. Like Bogdanov, he sought to "enrich" the gnoseological, ethical and aesthetic aspects of Marxist philosophy (whose basic tenets he accepted) with borrowings from empirio-criticism and Machism. It should be noted once again that most of the philosophical works, comments and letters of Marx and Engels were still unpublished at that time, and that those writings which had been

published abroad reached Russia with difficulty and by no means in full.

The inconsistencies of Lunacharsky's early philosophical views on aesthetics are apparent in his first significant theoretical work, "Principles of a Positive Aesthetics", in which he tried to pursue the anthropological traditions of Feuerbach's materialism and the aesthetics of the Russian revolutionary democrats, primarily N. Chernyshevsky, in the spirit of Machian neo-positivism. Following in the footsteps of Avenarius, the young philosopher believed that aesthetics "is one of the most important branches of biology as the science of life in general" and therefore he subordinated not only ethics but also the theory of knowledge to aesthetics.

The occasional correct observations and generalizations concerning aesthetic phenomena found in this work, or in his "Dialogue on Art" do not offset the overall fallaciousness of the methodological approach. But all his life Lunacharsky had explored unknown fields and sometimes he lost his way.

A very narrow, non-dialectical approach to the question of the influence of the biological factor on socio-historical phenomena is also apparent in other articles by the young philosopher ("On the Problem of Evaluation"; "The Problem of Cognition"). It should be noted here that in his later works, such as "Sociological and Pathological Factors in the History of Art" (1930), he made a searching analysis of the concrete historical role of the biological factor in culture and his original approach and conclusions are a contribution to Marxist aesthetic thought; and in his article "Lenin and Literary Scholarship" (1932), which was of fundamental importance to the develop-

ment of Soviet Marxist science in the post-revolutionary period, he made this observation:

"Marxist sociology 'disposes of' biology, but woe to him who fails to understand that Hegelian expression, explained by Lenin: To 'dispose of' means to end, but in such a way that what is ended is preserved in a higher synthesis. From which it follows that biological factors are no longer considered dominant in the social life of man, but not that the structure and functions of his organism, including his brain, diseases, etc., can be entirely ignored. They acquire a new character and are profoundly transformed by new social forces, but they do not disappear."

This, however, belongs to a much later and maturer period of Lunacharsky's thinking.

In "Principles of a Positive Aesthetics" and a number of other articles, the young scholar showed a leaning towards idealistic philosophical-aesthetic theories, primarily the empirio-criticism of Avenarius and Mach. Empirio-criticism saw the task of art to lie not in the reflection of reality, but in a more "economical" and "organized" assimilation (operating on the principle of "the least expenditure of energy") of "subjective experience" merging with the "collective experience" of mankind. "Experience" was viewed by the empirio-critical philosophers idealistically, not as the practical activity of man, but as the specific "content of consciousness". This "most recent discovery" was enthusiastically expounded by the young Lunacharsky immediately upon his return from exile in his popular presentation of Avenarius' theory of "pure experience".

But while pointing out Lunacharsky's idealistic deviations from Marxism manifest in his early

writings, one must not overlook what was valuable in them.

The attempt to create an optimistic aesthetics that is opposed to the ugly sides of the capitalist system, and that calls for the regeneration of the whole of life on the basis of freedom, beauty, and respect for man was in itself daring and challenging. The author of "Principles" pointed up the relationship between art and society and upheld the idea that the new society would absorb from the past everything that was valuable and truly beautiful in it. In the struggle for "the new democracy" he saw the real source of inspiration for modern art as an art capable of "improving the life of the people, painting bright pictures of happiness and betterment in the future, and alongside them disclosing all the horrid evils of the present, an art which aroused the sense of the tragic, the joy of struggle and victory, Promethean aspirations, unbending pride, unyielding courage."

In surveying this first period of Lunacharsky's writing, one cannot help admiring the intensity of his search and seeing that he posed a number of problems which were of fundamental importance to modern philosophy and tried to define a number of principles pertinent to Marxist aesthetics, such as the relationship between the intelligentsia and the people, the individual and society, the artist and the masses, art and politics, realism and romanticism, theory and practice. To all his work he brought a gifted, socially-oriented mind, fearless in its search for the truth.

* * *

In June, 1904, Lunacharsky and his wife returned from exile to the city of Kiev, where they

were welcomed by their friends and party comrades. They were not permitted to live in Petersburg or Moscow for five years from the date of their release. Lunacharsky's name immediately appeared in the pages of the newspaper *Kievskiye Otkliki*, for which he reviewed a number of plays, among them Ostrovsky's *Fairy Gold*, Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Hauptmann's *The Sunken Bell*, and Schiller's *Maria Stuart*.

In Kiev he received a secret message from Bogdanov insisting in his own and Lenin's name that Lunacharsky go abroad immediately to work on the central Bolshevik newspaper. "That was the difficult period of the complete break between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks," Lunacharsky said in his memoirs. "I stood more or less definitely for the Bolshevik position, though not all the aspects of the quarrel were clear to me. The decisive factor for me was not so much a detailed acquaintance with their differences as the fact that A. A. Malinovsky-Bogdanov had thrown himself completely into the Bolshevik movement and made himself as it were the chief spokesman in Russia for Lenin and his group."

In October, 1904, the Lunacharskys moved to Paris. Anatoli Vasilevich wavered; he was not sure that the split was necessary and tried to understand the position of each side, studying both the Menshevik and the Bolshevik literature. Meanwhile in Geneva his arrival was awaited with impatience, as indicated in the letters of Lenin's wife, N. K. Krupskaya and the urgent postscript Lenin added to one of them: "Do everything you can to make the light-minded Minonosets (Lunacharsky's nickname) move faster. The procrastination is inexplicable and terribly harmful.

Reply at once and in greater detail, and more definitely.”¹

On December 4, 1904, the meeting with Lenin, which was to light up the long and hard years of Lunacharsky's life, finally took place.

His very first talks with Lenin and their subsequent meetings in Paris dispersed his last doubts, and in December he left for Geneva to become one of the leaders of the Bolshevik faction. He was now convinced that the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov in proclaiming the liberal bourgeoisie rather than the peasantry the ally of the proletariat, saw the future revolution as a bourgeois revolution in aim, and that their “broad party” was primarily a party of the intelligentsia. The Bolsheviks had the support of the most consistently socialistic intellectuals as well as the better educated and progressive workers. The half-hearted political conduct of the Mensheviks and their readiness to accept compromise further exposed their true nature and their fundamental departure from Marxism.

Lunacharsky began to write for the Bolshevik newspaper *Vpered* and later also *Proletary*. He shared Lenin's political ideas and positions and worked with Lenin as a friend and comrade. He also worked together with the outstanding Russian Marxist publicists and literary critics V. Vorovsky and M. Olminsky.

Lunacharsky continued to give lectures and participate in debates, winning over to the side of the Bolsheviks increasing numbers of supporters from among the Russian emigrants and Russian students. His lecture tours took him all over Switzerland and to many of the emigrant and stu-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 43, pp. 133-134.

dent colonies in France, Belgium, Germany and Italy. He also gave talks on philosophy, literature and art before Russian and West-European audiences.

His first lecture in Geneva took place on December 24, 1904. The next day Krupskaya wrote several letters describing the impression it had made on her. "Our work is in full swing here," says one of them. "'Minonosets' has arrived and plunged right into battle. He is a splendid speaker and is creating a furore. On the whole things here are not bad now...." Or, again: "But now we are all in a better mood thanks to the arrival of a new comrade—a brilliant orator and talented writer. He has literally electrified the public. The Mensheviks are tearing their hair and raising a row... The Old Man (Lenin) has perked up and seems actually younger these past few days."

The years of work under Lenin's guidance (1904-07) were a wonderful school of journalism for Lunacharsky. Their cooperation on the newspapers *Vpered* and *Proletary* did much to develop Lunacharsky's gifts as a brilliant Bolshevik publicist and critic. Speaking of that side of Lunacharsky's personality, Krupskaya said: "For instance, somebody will come up with a correct and interesting idea, and Anatoli Vasilevich will take hold of it and proceed to formulate it so neatly, with such talent, that its author will be filled with wonder and marvel that an idea that was so simply and often clumsily expressed at first could reappear in such a surprisingly elegant and attractive form. It has been my pleasure more than once to be present during Vladimir Ilyich's discussions with Anatoli Vasilevich and watch them charging each other up."

Lunacharsky had now become a prominent Bolshevik. He delivered the main report on the armed uprising at the Third Congress of the RSDLP in 1905, he defended the Bolshevik line with pen and word. His trenchant articles and speeches bristling with sarcasm and irony so enraged the Mensheviks that they often tried to disrupt his appearances. Looking back on those years of struggle, the veteran Communist, historian and writer P. Lepeshinsky said: "The magnificent, precise, polished formulations of Vladimir Ilyich (Lenin) and brilliant fireworks of Voynov's (Lunacharsky's pseudonym) political ideas positively disorganized the ranks of the Mensheviks."

Every time Lunacharsky left Geneva, Lenin felt his absence keenly. In a letter to Lunacharsky dated August 1, 1905, he said, "It is very difficult for us without your regular close collaboration".¹ And on August 2, 1905, he reminded him, "Do you remember writing me that your absence from Geneva would be no loss, because you wrote a lot even from afar. You do write a lot. . . . But not only is there a loss, but a tremendous loss, which is felt more and more sharply every day."² Then, at the end of August, 1905, in another letter to Lunacharsky, he said: "Your plan for a pamphlet on *Three Revolutions* pleased me immensely. . . You must work as hard as you can for Social-Democracy—don't forget that you are committed *for your entire working time*."³

And Lunacharsky did work hard, writing about the history of the revolutionary movement, ex-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 43, pp. 161-162.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, p. 325.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

posing opportunism, and speaking on the fundamental problems of Bolshevik tactics at that juncture of the Russian liberation movement.

The revolution of 1905 brought him back to Russia. His articles now were fired with revolutionary fervour. Meetings were being held everywhere, and he knew no rest or sleep. He gave a course of paid public lectures to bring in money for the Party's needs. Though already associated as an editor with the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* (*New Life*), he contributed to other newspapers and journals. On the eve of 1906 he was arrested and spent over a month in the Kresty Prison in Petersburg, where he wrote the play *The King's Barber*.

Several charges had been brought against him. In May, 1906 for his article "On the Character of the Current Moment", he was accused of attacking tsarist rule and demanding the overthrow of the government and establishment of a democratic republic. He was called to account for writing the preface to the Russian edition of Kautsky's pamphlet "The Russian and the American Worker" (1906). On January 8, 1907, his *Three Cadets. A Pamphlet*, which Lenin praised, was banned. All indications were that he would be arrested again and thrown into prison for another five or six years. The Party decided that it would be best for him to leave Russia. In February, 1907, he emigrated to Europe.

During those years of revolutionary upheaval and for some years to come Lunacharsky continued to write articles in which he freely and with ease adapted his aesthetic analyses of the theatre, art and literature to the aims of the ideological struggle. Exposing the reactionary essence of the "left" and "right" decadence and the

decline and corruption of realism in the work of the Russian writers who had deserted the cause of the revolution after its 1905 defeat (M. Artsybashev, F. Sologub, L. Andreyev), he hailed the dedication to the revolution expressed in Gorky's novel *Mother*, and called for a militant art of the proletariat. In his articles on literary works he expounded revolutionary ideas and discussed and explained modern political ideas and views by citing examples from the history of culture. In "Dialogue on Art" (1905) he declared with the passionate conviction of the fighter: "Life is struggle, life is a battlefield; we do not conceal this, and we rejoice in it because we can already see the victory of more magnificent, more beautiful and humane forms of life. . . . What do we expect of the artist? We expect him *to teach us to love life. . . and to love it courageously.*"

Probably his most important contribution to aesthetic theory in the period preceding the October Revolution was his article "Tasks of Social-Democratic Artistic Creation" (1907). One might call it his manifesto of revolutionary art. In this polemical article directed against the notion that art was apolitical and stood above class, Lunacharsky argued with great publicistic force and scientific foresight that the future of artistic creation was indissolubly bound with the success of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. He called for the creation of a realistic proletarian art. He ridiculed the stance of the artist who failed to link his work with the proletariat: "Turn your back on the world, if you like—the bourgeoisie have nothing against that. Only don't smash it—they will not pat you on the head for that. Don't insist on real struggle, the struggle of force against force. Talk all you like, hide from

life in salons and studies, in hashish and dreams. For his attractive dreams the bourgeoisie will thank the artist as for the handsome 'moderne' furnishings of a salon or study. Some boldness of thought may even be allowed him, provided that it titillates the senses of the satiated descendants of the knights of initial capitalist accumulation." The true road for art lies in alliance with the movement of the proletariat: "Without the proletariat, the artist's sole choice is between open acceptance of shameful reality and clownish servility to the lords of life or—futile protest; without the proletariat there is no force capable of transforming the instrument of criticism into an effective instrument of social creation."

Under the pseudonym of "Voynov" Lunacharsky participated in August, 1907, in the International Socialist Congress which met in Stuttgart. A delegate with a vote, he entered into the Bolshevik faction. He still enjoyed Lenin's complete political trust at that time, and the two expressed quite similar views at the Congress. They took the same stand there on the question of the relationship between the socialist parties and the trade unions. Lunacharsky was the chief spokesman of the Bolsheviks in the committee dealing with that question; he took the floor as the main opponent of Plekhanov, criticizing the latter for favouring the political neutrality of the trade unions.

As is known, prior to the Fifth, London Congress of the RSDLP in 1907 Lenin also spoke in favour of trade union *neutrality*. But, as he wrote in 1907, "The London RSDLP Congress and the Stuttgart International Socialist Congress led me to conclude that trade-union neutrality

is not defensible as a *principle*... Our policy must be to bring the unions closer to the Party and link them with it.”¹

At this Congress and later, Lunacharsky joined Lenin in criticizing the opportunistic tendencies of the German Social-Democratic Party, especially on the question of the general strike and the struggle against militarism. At Lenin's request, Lunacharsky wrote a pamphlet on the relationship between the Party and the trade unions which was to have come out with a preface by Lenin. It was not published because the publishing activities of the Party had to be greatly curtailed during the years of the reaction.

Thus between 1904 and 1907 Lunacharsky played a prominent role in the planning and implementation of the revolutionary tactics of the Bolshevik faction and completely shared Lenin's political views. Nevertheless, their philosophical differences persisted, and these were further aggravated during the years of the reaction (1908-10) owing to the ideological renegacy of the intellectual fellow travellers of the Party who had lost faith in the revolution (and even of certain Party intellectuals). What is more, these philosophical differences extended into the political sphere and were carried over into the political struggle.

Lenin called, on the one hand, for support of the partisan activities of the workers' detachments against the military-police government apparatus, and, on the other, for participation in the elections to the Second State Duma (parliament) and for legal methods of political struggle within the

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 13, p. 108.

Duma, the trade unions and the cooperatives. Accordingly in the elections to the Duma early in 1907, the Bolsheviks rejected the slogan of boycott and endeavoured to use the Duma as a rostrum from which to expose tsarism, to carry on revolutionary propaganda, and to free the revolutionary peasantry of the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie and win it over to the side of the Social-Democrats.

This combination of legal and illegal methods of struggle was denounced as eclectic by the ultra-left Bolsheviks. Some of them insisted that the Social-Democratic deputies be recalled from the Duma; they came to be known as the "otzovisty" or "recallers". Bogdanov and his followers, for their part, confronted the Bolshevik faction in the Duma with an ultimatum demanding complete compliance with revolutionary Party tactics and refusing it political support if it rejected that ultimatum. They were the so-called "ulimatists".

Lenin and his supporters condemned both extremes. Lenin's relations with Bogdanov became very strained and a rift seemed imminent.

In 1909, Bogdanov formed the leftist group "Vpered", and Lunacharsky affiliated himself with it.

But in August-September, 1910 at the International Socialist Congress in Copenhagen which he attended as a delegate from the "Vpered" group, he voiced complete agreement with Lenin on all the questions debated there and was therefore entrusted by Lenin to speak for the Bolsheviks on the question of the workers' cooperatives.

Meeting in Capri (1909) and Bologna (1910), the "Vpered" group had set up factional schools or "universities" for workers from Russia. They were given help and material aid by Maxim Gor-

ky, with whom Lunacharsky was on the friendliest of terms. Lunacharsky lectured on the history of the German Social-Democratic movement, the theory and history of the trade union movement, and the general history of art and Russian literature; he also conducted a course in practical propaganda work and accompanied the worker-students on tours of the museums of Bologna, Naples, Rome and Paris.

But his main preoccupation at this time was the book *Religion and Socialism*, on which he worked from 1908 to 1911. In this book as well as in his articles "The Future of Religion" (1907) and "Atheism" (1908), he developed the philosophical concept he called "god-building".

What is "god-building"? What did Lunacharsky mean by the term? How was this concept received by Lenin and the Bolsheviks?

Later, in recalling his philosophical errors of those years, Lunacharsky was to say: "The idea came to me that while we Marxists, of course, deny the existence of any kind of a god, and know that there is no sense in looking for one, since one cannot find that which does not exist—still, we are surrounded by great numbers of people for whom the appeal of religion fills some definite need. Among them are elements (in particular the peasantry, as I saw it) for whom it would be easier to reach the truths of socialism through their religio-philosophical way of thinking than in any other way.

"At the same time, I argued, the ethical appeal latent in scientific socialism is tremendous; on the surface cold and exact, it harbours tremendous reserves of practical idealism. And so all one has to do is to bring out in a semi-poetical, publicistic manner this latent content of the

teaching of Marx and Engels for it to acquire a new attraction for such elements."

From this premise Lunacharsky proceeded in his writings to describe scientific socialism as the "forward march of mankind, with the help of social struggle, science and technology, towards ever greater, indeed immeasurable power over nature. It is not necessary to look for god. Let us give him to the world! There is no god in the world, but there might be. The road of struggle for socialism, that is, for man's triumph over nature, is what is meant by god-building." Socialism is thus "the highest form of religion"—religion without a god and without mysticism.

In conclusion, Lunacharsky said: "Subjectively it seemed to me that I was doing the Party a service. . . I insisted that my concept was still Marxism, but Marxism in special attire, aimed at influencing a specific section of the population, and that my definition of socialism, my term 'god-building' did not in the least deprive my concept of the most consistent atheism."

That was how Lunacharsky and his fellow-thinkers of the "Vpered" group saw it, but Lenin took a different view of "god-building". "However good your intentions may be, Comrade Lunacharsky, it is not a smile, but disgust that your flirtation with religion provokes."¹ Lenin considered this departure from materialism the natural consequence of Lunacharsky's empirio-criticism; and subjected his religious constructions to severe criticism in the book *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. At their Paris meeting which took place from June 21 to June 30, 1909, the Bolsheviks passed a resolution "On the God-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 14, p. 187.

Building Trend Among the Social-Democrats'', in which they characterized this trend, ''most strikingly propagated in the articles of Comrade Lunacharsky... as a trend harmful by the very essence of its teaching, not just its terminology, to the revolutionary social-democratic task of enlightening the toiling masses; the Bolshevik faction wants nothing to do with such a distortion of scientific socialism.''

While he criticized Lunacharsky's idealistic concepts severely and pointed out his deviations from Marxism in philosophy and politics, Lenin did all he could to bring about the return of the talented critic and publicist to Marxist positions and win him away from Bogdanov's influence in aesthetics.

* * *

Early in 1911 Lunacharsky left Italy for Paris by decision of the ''Vpered'' group. He lived in Paris until 1915, when he moved to Switzerland. His literary output of those years was varied in character. He was the regular correspondent of the Russian periodicals *Kievskaya Mysl* (*Kiev Thought*), *Den* (*Day*) and *Teatr i Iskusstvo* (*Theatre and Art*). His many articles on Western art and literature of the past and present, among them: ''Parisian Letters'' (1911-15), ''Critical Studies. West-European Literature'' which was published as a book in 1925, and his appreciations of Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw and others attest to his erudition, to the breadth and refinement of his artistic taste. In his writings on aesthetics and art he took a consistent stand against decadence and in defence of realism, being convinced that art was connected with the ideas of socialism and the revolutio-

nary struggle he spoke as a theorist of proletarian art (see his "Letters on Proletarian Literature" and articles on Maxim Gorky and other authors).

In this period Lunacharsky wrote a great many articles on a wide range of subjects, lectured before audiences of workers, gave talks in Italy, Paris, and Switzerland.

His interests in the fields of literary and art criticism were extremely wide. He made a serious study of French, Italian, German, Austrian, Swiss, Norwegian and English literature. He knew well the works of Goethe, Hauptmann, Rousseau, France, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Shaw, Whitman, Ibsen, Verhaeren, Spitteler, Lenau and others. He was the first Russian critic to call attention to the distinct national features of Austrian romanticism. He was the first to pay tribute to the greatness of Romain Rolland in the Russian press. He wrote a great deal about the artists who had linked their activities with the working class, and about the discussions raging around the trends of modernism, symbolism, and futurism.

His more than forty "Parisian Letters" reconstruct Paris' colourful theatrical life in the years between 1911 and 1914. His other articles on drama and the theatrical art include "The Neapolitan Theatre" (1910), "Modern Italian Drama" (1911), and "The Latest Plays of Bernard and D'Annunzio" (1914).

In the field of the fine arts he wrote *Philosophical Poems in Colour and Marble* (1909-10)—a series of articles on the art of ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance, "Thorwaldsen" (1910), "The Evolution of Sculpture" (1913), and "The Paintings of Paul Cézanne" (1914).

When the First World War broke out the Lunacharsky family was in Paris. Lunacharsky immediately took a stand in favour of revolutionary internationalism, sharing the position of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He had long talks with the French socialist leaders Jules Guesde and Marcel Sembat both of whom had entered the bourgeois government, denouncing their "defensism" and social-patriotism. In his publicistic writings he came out against the fever of chauvinism and nationalistic sentiments that had seized many of the Social-Democrats ("Europe in Its Dance of Death"). The internationalist stand of Lunacharsky and other members of the "Vpered" group brought them close to the Bolsheviks. Several weeks before the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia, Lunacharsky spoke of the necessity for an immediate uprising.

As if he foresaw the nature of his future work, Lunacharsky interested himself during 1915 and 1916 in problems of public education, read widely in the field of pedagogy, and visited the educational institutions of Switzerland, making the acquaintance of many famous educators.

After the February revolution which put an end to tsarist rule, Lenin and Lunacharsky reestablished their former cooperation and friendly relations. Towards the end of March Lunacharsky went to Zurich to see Lenin. In a letter to his wife on April 2 he wrote: "Lenin struck me as a great, even magnificent, and yet tragic and rather sad figure." Then, at the end of the same letter: "But of course Lenin is magnificent. A sort of grim lion readying himself for a desperate fight."

Then came the decision calling for their imme-

diate return to Russia. Lenin took the first train out, and Lunacharsky the next, leaving behind his wife and son Anatoli.

He arrived in Petrograd (now Leningrad) on May 22, 1917, and within the hour of his arrival was addressing a crowd of welcomers on a square, speaking for the Bolsheviks. On June 4, he debated A. Kerensky at a meeting of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. This ten-minute speech, his first at a top political level, made a great impression on the deputies.

In the May municipal elections in Petrograd, Lunacharsky, running on the Bolshevik ticket, won a seat in the Alexander-Nevsky District Duma. Then he was elected deputy head of the Petrograd city government and placed in charge of the cultural and educational affairs of the city. That included supervision of the schools, and clubs and other institutions of adult education. The knowledge and experience he had gained in Switzerland thus stood him in good stead.

And there were many other tasks that required his immediate attention—the organization of workers' educational societies and of committees to improve child feeding; the debates in the Petrograd Duma, and, of course, the constant propaganda in the factories and shops in favour of Russia's getting out of the imperialist war, ousting the capitalist ministers from the government, nationalizing the land and giving the landlords' estates to the peasants.

Lunacharsky also devoted much time and energy to his work for the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*, which first came out on April 18, 1917. One of the editors of that paper was Maxim Gorky. Lenin approved of Lunacharsky's association with

the newspaper and his plan for turning the publication into "an auxiliary organ of the revolution."

The Bolshevik Party mounted the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" which marked a decisive step towards transforming the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution.

And suddenly Petrograd learned of the approach of a rebel army led by General Kornilov. Lunacharsky began to work for the Bolshevik Defense Committee. He wrote leaflets which were dropped by plane.

The peaceful period of the revolution had come to an end. The task now was to prepare for the armed uprising which would overthrow the bourgeois Provisional Government.

That summer the Provisional Government issued an order for the arrest of Lunacharsky on the grounds of treason to the state. He was thrown into the Kresty Prison, as once before in 1906. But two weeks later he was released thanks to the mounting revolutionary tide.

Lunacharsky was everywhere to be seen in those days, at factory and street meetings, in the Petrograd Soviet, at rallies held in the "Modern" circus, in the barracks addressing the soldiers. He prepared and delivered before mass audiences a course of popular lectures entitled "The Great Democratic Communes" (Athens, the communes of medieval Italy, the Paris Commune, etc.)

Russia was moving rapidly and irreversibly towards another revolution. And Lunacharsky made his contribution towards its preparation and the spread of an understanding of its aims among the masses.

The People's Commissar for Education

Then came the October Revolution. The shots from the battleship *Aurora* and the Fortress of Peter and Paul announced the victory of the socialist revolution and the birth of the first state of workers and peasants—Soviet Russia.

On November 7, 1917 (October 25 in the old calendar), at 10:45 p.m., the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opened in the Smolny. It was attended by representatives of the regional and district Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

Lunacharsky addressed the Congress twice. He denounced the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks who had walked out of the Congress, and he read out Lenin's appeal "To Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers!" proclaiming the transfer of power to the Soviets.

The next day, November 8, the Congress issued a decree announcing the formation of the workers' and peasants' government headed by V. I. Lenin—"Sovnarkom" or Council of People's Commissars. At Lenin's suggestion Lunacharsky was appointed People's Commissar for Education.

It would have been hard to find another political leader so well suited to that post. Lunacharsky's erudition in many fields of culture, his remarkable personal qualities, his deep dedication to the cause of the revolution and socialism were well known to the Party and the Russian

intelligentsia, not excluding his ideological opponents and the political enemies of the Soviet system.

In his memoirs, Lunacharsky recalled one of his first conversations with Lenin following his appointment as Education Commissar. "I would like a word with you, Anatoli Vasilevich," began Lenin. "I haven't time now to burden you with all kinds of instructions about your new duties, nor can I say that I have any clearly thought-out set of ideas concerning the first steps of the revolution in the field of education. Obviously, much will have to be changed entirely, and revised, and launched on new lines." Then, having advised the new Commissar to take advantage of the help and knowledge of Krupskaya in school matters and of Pokrovsky in questions of higher education, and to make the most of the great role the libraries could play in bringing knowledge to the working people, Lenin went on to say: "In all reforms, I believe, it is necessary to be extremely careful. It's a very complicated matter, but one thing is clear: everything must be done to give the masses, and above all the proletarian youth, broader access to the higher schools."

During a discussion of the new government's policy with regard to non-Party specialists and teachers, the Education Commissar was advised by Lenin "to make the vast body of teachers themselves carry not just general culture, but our communist ideas into the very heart of the countryside, let alone the towns... Of course, there are Black-Hundred, Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik tendencies among all categories of specialists and in the top teaching profession," continued Lenin, "and we must fight them, some-

times mercilessly. But many of them can be won over to our side. The truth of our ideas and our victory will work for us." And he added, summing up the matter: "If you permit a process of disintegration of our communist principles to take place, if you dissolve and lose yourself in the non-Party milieu, that will be a grave offense. But if you set yourself up as a sect, a sort of caste of victors, thereby incurring the mistrust and antagonism of the wide masses, and then fall back on the excuse that they are philistines, are an alien element, are class enemies, we shall make you answerable for it with all the severity of revolutionary law."

One day during the 1918-19 theatre season, on stepping into Lenin's office, Lunacharsky was engaged by him in a detailed discussion of Party policy in the sphere of art. The gist of their conversation, as Lunacharsky recalled it, was as follows: "'And so, to sum up,' I said, 'everything that is more or less worthwhile in the old art must be preserved. Art—living, not museum art—the theatre, literature, music must be gently steered in the direction of speedy evolution to meet the new requirements. The new trends must be approached with care and not be allowed to monopolize the field, while being granted every opportunity to gain increasing prominence by virtue of their genuine artistic worth. In that respect they may be given the utmost assistance.'

"Lenin replied: 'I think you have formulated it quite correctly. Now try to put that across to our public and, in fact, to the public at large in your speeches and articles.'

" 'May I use your name?' I asked.

" 'What for? I do not hold myself up as a specialist on questions of art. Since you are the

People's Commissar, your own authority must be adequate.'

"The conversation ended there, and that, by and large, was the policy our Party and the Soviet government had consistently pursued," Lunacharsky concluded.

These passages are quoted here not in order to show the guiding role which Lenin's ideas played in the field of education, and certainly not in order to convey the impression that the relationship between Lenin and Lunacharsky was that of teacher and pupil. Their relationship was much more complex and also much easier and freer, both before and after the October Revolution. In one of his many tributes to Lenin's genius and wisdom, Lunacharsky acknowledged the great influence which Lenin had exerted on his career as a revolutionary, philosopher and statesman; he prided himself on having appreciated and accepted that influence. And, of course, he viewed the whole range of educational and cultural tasks facing socialist society in the light of Lenin's ideas. But he, too, was a remarkable man, a figure of the first magnitude. He contributed theoretically and practically to the Leninist elaboration of the problems of education and culture, literature and art. To map the concrete ways of building a socialist culture in such a large and backward country was no easy task, and Lenin certainly did not undertake to accomplish it alone.

And still, whenever Lunacharsky let his impulsive nature bear him too far afield, he needed Lenin's wise guidance. There were many such occasions. One of them occurred very soon after the Revolution, and had to do with Lunacharsky's

resignation from his post as Education Commissar.

It was rumoured in Petrograd that during the October uprising the cultural monuments in Petrograd and Moscow and some of the estates of the nobility had been ransacked. This rumour was played up by the bourgeois press. The journal *Apollon* published an extract from an appeal issued by the Union of Artists saying: "During the internecine fighting, the Winter Palace was desecrated. Such artistic treasures of world-wide importance as the Moscow Kremlin and the cathedrals of Vasili the Blessed and the Assumption have been despoiled."

In response to these slanderous rumours, on November 15, 1917, Lunacharsky submitted a request to the government to be released from his post as People's Commissar for Education. His request was published by one of the newspapers. The government did not accept his resignation and after speaking to Lenin Lunacharsky withdrew it. On November 16, he sent out an appeal, "Protect the People's Property", which he signed himself as People's Commissar for Education, and which was published by the newspapers the following day. And before many more days had passed, Lunacharsky realized that the rumours about the destruction of the Kremlin and the cathedrals were provocations. He then wrote a series of articles, among them "Why We Are Preserving the Palaces of the Romanovs" and "Why We Must Safeguard the Treasures of the Churches", in which he expressed his belief that the government chosen by the people was responsible to the people for the protection of their national treasures, which if lost could never be replaced. He remained true to that belief.

The capture of the Winter Palace, seat of the bourgeois government, still did not ensure complete power. There were officials in the ministries who had no desire to cooperate with the workers' and peasants' government and were not doing their work. The teachers of Moscow and many other cities in Russia went on strike. So did the theatres of Moscow and Petrograd. The enemies of the Soviet government started a civil war. The situation was difficult in the extreme; the fate of the revolution seemed to hang in the balance.

The People's Commissar for Education had to work without rest or sleep and to solve a thousand urgent and super-urgent tasks large and small, most of them quite remote from his immediate duties. More than half his time was taken up with journeys to other parts of the country (Ryazan, Kostroma, Yaroslavl and Saratov regions) as a representative of the Central Committee of the Party, the Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (VTSIK),¹ sent to solve current economic and political problems. He also visited the fronts of the civil war and adjoining areas between 1919 and 1921 as a representative of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic. This war work took him to Chernigov, Kiev and Zhitomir, Kharkov, Tula, the Odessa and Nikolayev regions and Rostov-on-Don.

He was a man with a colossal capacity for

¹ VTSIK—the supreme legislative, executive and controlling body of the RSFSR from 1917 to 1937, which functioned in the intervals between the All-Russia Congresses of Soviets.

work; every day was packed to the limit. In addition to the tremendous load he carried in the ministry, he continued to make public appearances (on December 17, 1917, for instance, the newspaper *Pravda* carried an announcement of four of his coming speeches) and to write articles. There was hardly a sphere of civic life at that time with which he was not directly concerned.

All during the civil war a man in army coat and cap, wearing pence-nez, could be seen among the troops at the front and in frontline towns and villages, talking to the soldiers, the peasants and workers, the heads of Party and Soviet organizations, the commanders of the Red Army. As he hurried from one to another, he left with each something of his faith, his belief and his dedication. To Lenin he sent letters precisely describing the situation in the localities.

The fronts of the Civil War were supplanted by the fronts of peace, and these were many. As in the days when the Soviet land had to fight for its very existence, the chief tasks were distributed along three fronts: military, economic, and cultural. They persisted after the defeat of the White armies and the last of the foreign interventionists in the year 1920.

The government began to focus its attention increasingly on educational problems. That was apparent from the fact that Lenin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, came more closely to look into the policy and practical activities of the People's Commissariat for Education. On September 26, 1920, soon after the end of the war with Poland, Lenin heard a report on public education by Lunacharsky at a session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, during the

Congress of Soviets. He drew Lunacharsky into the work of the Third Communist Youth Congress (October 6, 1920) at which he himself made his famous speech on the tasks of the Komsomol, with its emphasis on learning and moral questions. Lunacharsky appealed to the youth not only to study, but to help the millions of peasants who were just beginning to learn to read and write after the Revolution to take the first steps towards literacy. Both he and Lenin had something more than the acquisition of knowledge in mind when they spoke of public education, however. For them the term embraced the general culture of the people and the promotion of moral standards that would answer the needs of the new society. The publication of Lunacharsky's speech "What Is Education?" in pamphlet form in 1922, demonstrated clearly that the aim should be the *formation of the human personality*.

This point deserves special mention because the wide range of his duties during his twelve years as Education Commissar and the colossal amount of work he did in the performance of those duties constitute one of the most important aspects of his biography. Lunacharsky's special place in the cultural activity of Soviet society in its early period was pointed out by Lenin at a Party meeting on questions of education held at the end of 1920: "In the Commissariat for Education there are two—just two—comrades who have special assignments. These are the People's Commissar, Comrade Lunacharsky, who exercises general direction, and Deputy Commissar, Comrade Pokrovsky, who directs affairs, firstly, as Deputy People's Commissar, and secondly, as official adviser (and director) on scientific matters and questions of Marxism in general. The whole

Party knows both Comrade Lunacharsky and Comrade Pokrovsky very well and has no doubt, of course, that in this respect both are, in their way, 'specialists' in the People's Commissariat for Education."¹

Is it possible to be such "specialists" today under the differentiation which exists between the spheres of culture and within each sphere?

Authors of memoirs who knew Lunacharsky personally had high praise for his erudition naming many branches of learning in which he was the equal of the best informed specialists. Lunacharsky himself firmly rejected such praise, but thanks to his unusual memory and perhaps even more unusual love of knowledge in both its living and scientific manifestations he did in truth know much more than most of those who rightly considered themselves intellectuals. For instance, in the preface to his books on music (*In the World of Music*, 1923, and *Problems of the Sociology of Music*, 1926) he warned the reader that he did not consider himself "enough of a specialist" to analyze musical works or performances on the plane of musical theory for the benefit of either professional musicians or the well-trained listener. And he did not undertake such tasks, in fact. But he did something which nobody before him had ever been able to do. Owing to his knowledge of the history of society, the history of philosophical, ethical and religious ideas and the general history of art and material culture, and also to his love for and familiarity with music, he was able to disclose the organic bond between the realities of human life in its historical variability and that special world created by man which is

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 32, pp. 124-125.

music. In so doing he achieved two things. One result, the main one for him, was that he revealed to the masses of people who were accustomed to look upon music as no more than an unimportant accessory or pastime that music constituted a vast sphere of feeling and thinking which answered a deep human need, reflected the real world, and helped to mould the human psyche as a whole.

Secondly, he called to the attention of the musicologist the fact that his field of study was tremendously enriched when it was not limited to empirical experience or to mathematical and acoustic laws, but was seen as part of the intellectual life of man, of the real and variable life of society, in other words, when music was not regarded as something that existed outside of definite historical conditions. Thus Lunacharsky, the "non-specialist in the field of music" but "something of a specialist in the sphere of culture", made a great contribution to both the sphere which relates to the rise of the cultural demands of the wide masses to an incomparably higher level, and to musicology whose frontiers he broadened by introducing Marxist, that is, truly historical, socio-historical views into its thinking.

Or, to take another concrete example. In 1923 and 1924, Lunacharsky delivered a course of lectures on "The History of West European Literature in Its Basic Phases". In his first lecture he analyzed the concept of aesthetic activity as manifested in its earliest phases, of which there remained definite monuments of material culture, of spoken and musical folklore. That was followed by several popular lectures on the period of antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the era of bourgeois society, which took him up to

the 1920s. The course was designed for the students of the Moscow Communist University, in other words, for those who in the near future would be called upon to work as the heads of various civic and government institutions, from Party and administrative bodies to organizations directly concerned with cultural and educational work. Lunacharsky's gift for popularizing and public speaking together with his enthusiasm for the subject to which he had devoted his whole life worked a real revolution in the minds of his hearers, in their understanding of life, history, the essential unity of human development, the rich content of human life. Their eyes were opened to new prospects of future development which enhanced the significance of their own work. Naturally, this popular course of lectures could not compete in fullness of detail or comprehensiveness with the lectures of university professors before their students, but few such professors awakened such respect for culture, such a desire to partake of its riches, such delight in grasping its achievements, which for centuries had remained hidden from all but a privileged few in class society.

And Lunacharsky did not merely acquaint his hearers, with whom he shared the same social ideals and way of thinking, with what was already established or known. His lectures abounded in vivid and fresh interpretations of literary trends, authors and books. His analysis of *Don Quixote*, which shed new light on the moral and historical content of the great novel, pleased even such a distinguished expert on Cervantes as the well-known Spanish author M. Unamuno.

Thus it is clear that Lenin entrusted Lunacharsky with the general direction of the country's

vast cultural movement not simply by virtue of the post he held. This was a forward movement comparable in importance and novelty to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries and surpassing the latter in scope embracing as it did broad masses of people, and its foremost promoters have one signal feature in common—the comprehensive encyclopaedic character of their knowledge, and a philosophy of life and the world which embraced all the distinct spheres of contemporary culture.

That is why Lunacharsky could hold his own in conversations with the geochemist Vernadsky, the physicists Langevin and Ioffe, the theatre innovators Stanislavsky and Meierhold, the artists S. Moissi and Mikhail Chekhov, the writers R. Rolland, H. Barbusse and G. Hauptmann and many other distinguished scientists and men of letters.

* * *

Today in the Soviet Union questions of education and culture are the concern of the ministries of education which supervise pre-school and grade school education, the Ministries of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education, the Ministry of Culture, the All-Union Academy of Sciences and its many affiliates, the educational departments of various industrial and agricultural enterprises, the State Committee for Cinematography under the Council of Ministers and the State Committee for the Publishing, Printing and Sale of Books.

In the days when Lunacharsky was the head of the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, that ministry concerned itself with everything from the classes for the eradication of illi-

teracy to museums of art, history and ethnography and memorial museums, from opera houses to the village clubs. Under the People's Commissariat for Education there was a State Scientific Council (GUS) with many sections, a Main Office of Scientific Institutions (Glavnauka), a Main Office of Vocational Training (Glavprofobr), and other bodies. These were staffed with famous scientists, artists and educators and many other dedicated if less distinguished cultural workers.

It would be wrong to think that everything went well from the start. Of course not. Many were the stillborn projects, the unfulfilled dreams, the promises for the distant future. And many were the bureaucratic schemes and pages of official correspondence that went into the waste basket. And Lunacharsky himself was not incapable of endorsing unrealistic plans and making errors, and his deputy Pokrovsky often went a little too far in his controversies with conservative scientists. The meetings of the Board of the People's Commissariat for Education sometimes reverberated with heated arguments. And still Lunacharsky, who occasionally could not resist a biting retort, one that was sure to be clever and amusing but not always kind, succeeded in making the Board an integrated body capable of reaching joint decisions. The heads of his departments loved him, succumbed to the magic sway of his quick, flexible mind, and admired his unaffected and thoughtful way with all.

Of this aspect of Lunacharsky's character, which was clearly reflected in his social behaviour, one could say much. His attitude to other people was as democratic as were his ideas; he was just as polite to the old woman in the cloakroom as to any celebrity. Impulsive and quick in his reac-

tions, he hardly ever grew angry or showed signs of irritation, and if he did, they passed quickly. He reserved the fire of his temperament for his public speeches and polemical articles. In general he took a deep interest in other people and liked them (except for self-opinionated, conceited "smarties"), and made himself easy to reach—a useful quality for a statesman. Every week he received an endless stream of visitors, including teachers, Komsomol workers, students, artists. All of them came for advice or help, or to lay their complaints or projects on his desk. Of course, that took much of his time, especially since there were always those who were ready to knock on his door at home without thinking that their visit would interfere with his writing, research and rest. To protect him from his own popularity was no easy job for his secretaries and the members of his family.

In 1922, Lunacharsky married again. His second wife was the actress Natalya Alexandrovna (née Satz, the widow of a Soviet commander who was killed during the Civil War). Following this change in his personal life, he left his Kremlin apartment for a more accessible ordinary house situated at No. 9a Denezhny Lane, near Arbat (now the corner of Vesnin and Lunacharsky streets). His study in that house is now a memorial museum open to the public. The shortcoming of his new quarters was that they were in fact too accessible to tiresome visitors, but the advantages more than made up for this inconvenience. The doors of Lunacharskys' apartment on Denezhny Lane were opened to actors, writers, artists, musicians, scientists old and young, diplomats, army men, and to guests from other countries. There, in an informal atmosphere, his guests

could converse with Lunacharsky on any aspect of Soviet cultural life. If time permitted it was Lunacharsky's habit after attending a play to go backstage and talk to the company as soon as the curtain went down; this did much to foster good relations of mutual trust and understanding between members of the art world and the member of the Soviet government.

Such relations were not established overnight. In the beginning, when the Bolsheviks first came to power, they practically had no contact with the art world. Along with the most reactionary periodicals, the petty-bourgeois "democratic" newspapers, including those that posed as "socialistic", predicted that the new government, if it were not overthrown immediately, would close the universities, museums, theatres, and so on. Even the genuinely democratic section of the intelligentsia, that least tainted with reactionary ideas, the intellectuals who really cared that three-quarters of the Russian population were illiterate before 1917—even they did not believe that a government of "uncultured" workers could accomplish the feat it did: about three million people learned to read and write in the course of 1920 alone, thanks to the steps taken by the People's Commissariat for Education that year.

How little the civil servants or the petty-bourgeois segments of the population believed in the viability of the new government can be seen from the fact that Lunacharsky gathered together the few people who had agreed to work in the People's Commissariat for Education to celebrate the 30th day of the existence of Soviet government as proof of the stability of the new system!

Sabotage against the new government began to subside gradually but did not disappear enti-

rely. Even the schoolteachers went on strike; the leadership of the Teachers' Union was made up of supporters of the deposed bourgeois government under Kerensky which had opposed Russia's withdrawal from the war, the distribution of land among the peasants, and the termination of the dominance of the bankers and industrial capitalists. Sabotage hampered the formation and functioning of important government institutions. But only on rare occasions did the Soviet government resort to force in order to break the resistance of its desperate foes. The main weapon of the Communists was persuasion and explanation of the government's aims. One of the persons who attended the "celebration in honour of the 30th day of the existence of the Soviet government" has left us his recollection of Lunacharsky's speech on that occasion:

"The facts and arguments which Lunacharsky marshalled in his speech on the occasion of our 30-days jubilation! He spoke of the seven days it had taken the Lord to create the world, the forty days of the Flood, the hundred days of Napoleon, the seventy days of the Paris Commune.... Before his enchanted listeners there were unfolded pictures of things they had never dreamed about and never could have imagined. For the first time in their lives officials beheld a minister who delivered an address. And how he spoke! A burst of applause split the air when he finished."

That was only one of his speeches—and how many he gave! In five months in 1929 he appeared 113 times before audiences of workers, Kom-somol members, students, armymen, teachers, scientists and artists. It is not surprising that everybody knew Lunacharsky and loved him. No

one who had heard him speak or come into personal contact with him ever forgot him again.

"I wonder if Anatoli Vasilevich knew that we had travelled all of 130 or 140 versts from a backwoods village to hear him speak," wrote one of his listeners. "We came to hear him and we went away deeply moved and filled with lofty ideas and feelings, with gratitude to the brilliance of his mind..."

One of the tactical principles of Soviet government policy was formulated by Lenin as follows: the intellectuals, having, most of them, lived by inertia under the bureaucratic bourgeois system of 20th-century Russia, isolated from the militant democratic traditions of the 19th century and having become unaccustomed to independent political thinking, would come to recognize Soviet power when they were convinced that socialism would give them opportunities for fruitful activity such as they had never even dreamed of before.

Lunacharsky, one of the most devoted and gifted propagandists of revolutionary Marxist policy, did much to draw the old intelligentsia increasingly into useful work for the benefit of socialist society.

His role in the promotion of the new culture and in defining its paths was truly outstanding. He made Lenin's principle that all new beginnings be subjected to the merciless test of experience the rule of all his activity. We shall return to this question in the closing chapter. Here it is only necessary to point out that Lunacharsky's deep understanding of the Marxist approach to the revolutionary regeneration of culture helped him to prevent his comrades from making mistakes. Take the question, for example, of the new

general education school and principles and methods of its functioning. Heated arguments took place among the workers of the Commissariat for Education on this question. O. Y. Schmidt, a mathematician and man of considerable learning, insisted on the early vocational training of the pupils in the belief that this would promote the development in the children of a higher sense of practical usefulness. Other members of the Board of the Education Commissariat wanted the whole school system radically reorganized and demanded a complete break with all classical methods and principles of education. It was the great service of Lunacharsky, Krupskaya and Pokrovsky that on the basis of a critical assessment of the history of the great educational theories of the past as well as the most progressive theories of the present, they defined the basic principles of the theory and practice of public education, including the principles of polytechnical education and the all-round harmonious development of the pupils.

It is not our purpose here to write a history of Soviet pedagogy or of Soviet culture generally. What we propose to do here is to touch, and that but briefly, on these questions in so far as they help us to delineate the personality of Lunacharsky as a man and as a public figure. Thus many of the ideas and forms of cultural work which wrought such great changes during that period are not discussed.

In 1929, Lunacharsky was appointed the chairman of the TSIK¹ Committee in charge of scien-

¹ TSIK—Central Executive Committee of the USSR. Between 1922 and 1938 the highest organ of state power in the USSR during the intervals between the All-Union Congresses of Soviets.

tific work and the scientific institutions of the Soviet republic. Under it came the USSR Academy of Sciences, of which Lunacharsky was elected a member in 1930, the Communist Academy and other scholarly research institutions.

The guiding principle of all of Lunacharsky's activity as Education Commissar was careful preservation of all the genuine cultural achievements of the past, critical evaluation of these achievements and their utilization as a foundation for creative work during the era of worldwide struggle for socialism. He did Soviet culture a great service in bringing the artistic treasures, through his writings, to the masses who formerly knew the palaces, landlords' estates and monuments only as the strongholds of their hated oppressors.

In September and October, 1918, he was busy organizing a single State Museum Fund for the preservation of all art collections of historical or aesthetic value. The work of preserving and enriching the collections of paintings and other art treasures housed in the Hermitage, the Russian Museum and the Tretyakov Gallery was accompanied by the organization of training courses for hundreds of museum guides qualified to familiarize the masses with the new ideological approach to the old cultural treasures which now belonged to them. He insisted on the preservation of the Palekh and other folk art and crafts guilds, the former Imperial Chinaware Factory, and Vologda lacemaking, and that at a time when men in high positions were pronouncing them outdated and unnecessary for the proletariat; he had had to defend many of the beautiful things that are cherished by the Soviet people today. One of his speeches was called "Why We Are Preserving the Bolshoi Theatre".

Of course, the credit for the preservation of the treasures mentioned above and of many others does not belong to Lunacharsky alone; no one person could have accomplished that by himself. It was made the cause of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government. But these bodies, strongly united as they were, sometimes had clash of opinion, each seeking to influence the final decision. A man like Lunacharsky, who was able to persuade and win over those of his colleagues who did not understand correctly Lenin's position on the question of the cultural heritage, filled a great need.

Lunacharsky's part in the adoption of government decisions was not limited to cultural questions. As a member of the Government with a voice in the All-Russia Central Executive Committee (VTSIK) and the Council of People's Commissars (SOVNARKOM) he participated fully in the drawing up and implementation of the general measures of the Government.

Of particular importance were his trips to different cities, where he delivered reports on the domestic and foreign policy of the Soviet Government: to Tomsk, Omsk, and Novosibirsk in 1923; to Samara (now Kuibyshev) and Simbirsk (Ulianovsk) in 1924; to Saratov and Astrakhan in 1926; to Baku and various parts of Daghestan in 1928; to Rostov-on-Don, Armavir and Salsk in 1928; to Samara, Kinel, Saratov and Penza also in 1928; to Perm, Ufa, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, the Altai Steppes, Kuzbass, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, and Krasnoyarsk in 1929, and so on. These reports were accounts of the Government's work and all listeners who wished to speak up were invited to do so. Lunacharsky brought back from these trips valuable reports to the Government

on the situation in various parts of the country and the needs of the people there. And he took advantage of every such trip to acquaint himself with the work of the local educational institutions, public libraries, clubs, theatres, and the rural travelling motion picture service. His constant personal contact with the people, his utilization of every opportunity to study the different social processes taking place in the big factories and the remote rural areas added to his concrete knowledge of the life of the Soviet people. Questions from the audience submitted to him during meetings and his own notes and comments concerning the most interesting speeches all contributed to the fund of information which the Government needed in its work.

In the spring of 1927 Lunacharsky undertook his first trip to Western Europe since 1917. He delivered a number of lectures on Soviet culture, mostly in Paris and Berlin, before audiences of intellectuals who held different social, political, and philosophical views. Many of those who did not feel the least sympathy with the idea of changing (to say nothing of destroying) the bourgeois system heard his reports on the problems of Soviet culture with interest and got their first inkling of the real cultural significance of what was happening in the Soviet republic. As for the less conservative, the more progressive intellectuals of the West, ties were established with them which led to a continued correspondence with Lunacharsky, visits to the Soviet Union, the exchange of books, and so on. It was at this time that Lunacharsky was dubbed the "Soviet cultural ambassador" by the democratic and communist press of the West.

In the following years Lunacharsky attended

many international scholarly conferences abroad as a delegate from the Soviet Union. During these conferences on philosophy, history, aesthetics, or the theatre, he gained for Soviet culture increasing numbers of friends interested in serious cultural contacts with Soviet science and with Marxism.

* * *

We have tried to give the reader some idea of those years of Lunacharsky's life which were taken up chiefly with his activities as Education Commissar. The next and final chapter will tell about his work in the field of art.

Lunacharsky and Art

In the home where Lunacharsky's childhood years passed, the interest in books, music and the theatre was even more pronounced than in the usual Russian intellectual family.

His father was a well-read and educated man who did much to further his son's literary inclinations. His elder brother, Mikhail Vasilevich, was an accomplished amateur musician whose voice was praised by the great Russian singer Chaliapin. During his school years Anatoli himself studied piano and musical theory but showed no particular ability in these fields. More important was his understanding and appreciation of music.

The art of the word, whether spoken—in the

form of oratory, or written—in all spheres and genres of literature, was the field in which he displayed his artistic bent most fruitfully. We have already quoted some personal tributes to his oratory. All his appearances as a speaker were outstanding: his university lectures, his speech on Hegel and Marxist dialectics at the World Philosophical Congress, or that at the Goethe Memorial meeting in Weimar; his speeches at Party and government congresses and meetings; his contributions to the public discussions on realism and modernism in art, and his debates on atheism and the religious world view with the then famous “Golden-mouthed” Metropolitan Vvedensky; his reports on the domestic and foreign situation before audiences of Soviet workers, peasants and intellectuals or listeners in other countries; his propaganda speeches at mass meetings devoted to important political events; his introductory remarks at the beginning of the Beethoven or Scriabin concert series; his speech of farewell at Mayakovsky’s funeral; and his address at the unveiling of the Ostrovsky monument.

As regards Lunacharsky as an orator, his contemporaries often said that he “spoke beautifully”. That is only relatively true. The stenographic records of his speeches reveal lapses and faults of style which cannot all be blamed on the stenographers. He often broke off in the middle of a sentence and started over again. Some of his metaphors were forced, not because of bad taste, but because he did not attend to the polishing of his sentences. The underlying ideas of his speeches were always well thought out and their general structural development intrinsically suited to the content. Yet the actual presentation on the whole

often sounded almost improvised, as if he were speaking on the inspiration of the moment.

What made Lunacharsky seem such a great orator to both the highly educated audiences who heard him and the masses of people who presumably lacked the background to assimilate the complicated and deep philosophical ideas he placed before them? Evidently it was the fact that he sincerely went along with his listeners, thinking and feeling with them and carrying them with him, and they in turn followed him, thinking and feeling with him even when their way of thinking and feeling was not the same as his. It is true that Lunacharsky tried to be as clear, understandable and expressive in his speeches as possible, but that was not his chief aim. His sincerity was the sincerity of conviction, of his firm belief in the ideals of communism.

It is impossible within the scope of this booklet to present a full picture of Lunacharsky's literary activity. An incomplete bibliography of his published articles and books on literature and art (part of which are stenographic records of his speeches) lists 2,000 titles. The 8-volume collection of his writings on literature does not cover his output in that one sphere alone. His articles on painting and sculpture fill two volumes, on music—another thick volume. As for his articles on pedagogy and various aspects and problems of public education, they would fill a library. What is more, not all his writings on politics, history and philosophy have been collected, and only a small part of it has been published.

Lunacharsky introduced his Soviet and foreign readers to many great Soviet and Western figures who were little known to them and whose greatness only came to be fully appreciated later. He



Young Lunacharsky (sitting on a footstool) with his parents (picture taken approx. in 1880)



Lunacharsky as a pupil
at a grammar school
in Kiev in 1888



Lunacharsky in 1899
(picture taken when
he was in the Taganka
prison in Moscow)



Lunacharsky with his son (1911)



Visiting Maxim Gorky on the Isle of Capri (Italy) in 1900. Lenin and A. Bogdanov are playing chess



Lunacharsky (1919-20)

Salle du Conseil communal **VEVEY**
 11, Rue de la Rose, 11

Grand 8 Mars, à 8 h. 1/2 du soir

Conférence — **français**
 sur le grand romancier russe

Maxime GORKY

à l'occasion du 25th anniversaire de sa carrière littéraire

A. LOUNATCHARSKY
 publiciste et critique d'art russe

1) La biographie de l'écrivain. - 2) Gorky - artiste. - 3) L'évolution de ses idées dominantes. - 4) Gorky et la Guerre. - Quelques souvenirs personnels sur Gorky.

CARTES D'ENTRÉE
 1 franc et 1/2 de port en outre. - Librairie L. KOLBERT à Vevey et Bâle et à Genève.

Announcement about Lunacharsky's lecture on the 25th anniversary of Maxim Gorky's career as a writer. Vevey (Switzerland), 1917

„...„МІР для ПРОЛЕТАРІАТА-ЭТО
 БЕЗПРЕСДВІННИЙ БЕЗПЕРЕРВНИЙ
 ПОТОК СИЛ, ВІСНОВИЙ
 КАСКАД НЕІСТО-
 ЩИМОЇ ЕНЕРГІЇ...



ЦИРК „МОДЕРН“ СЕР. II ПОСЛІД. ЛЕКЦІЯ
АЛУНАЧАРСКАГО
„ЦАРСТВО —
— СОЦІАЛІЗМА.“

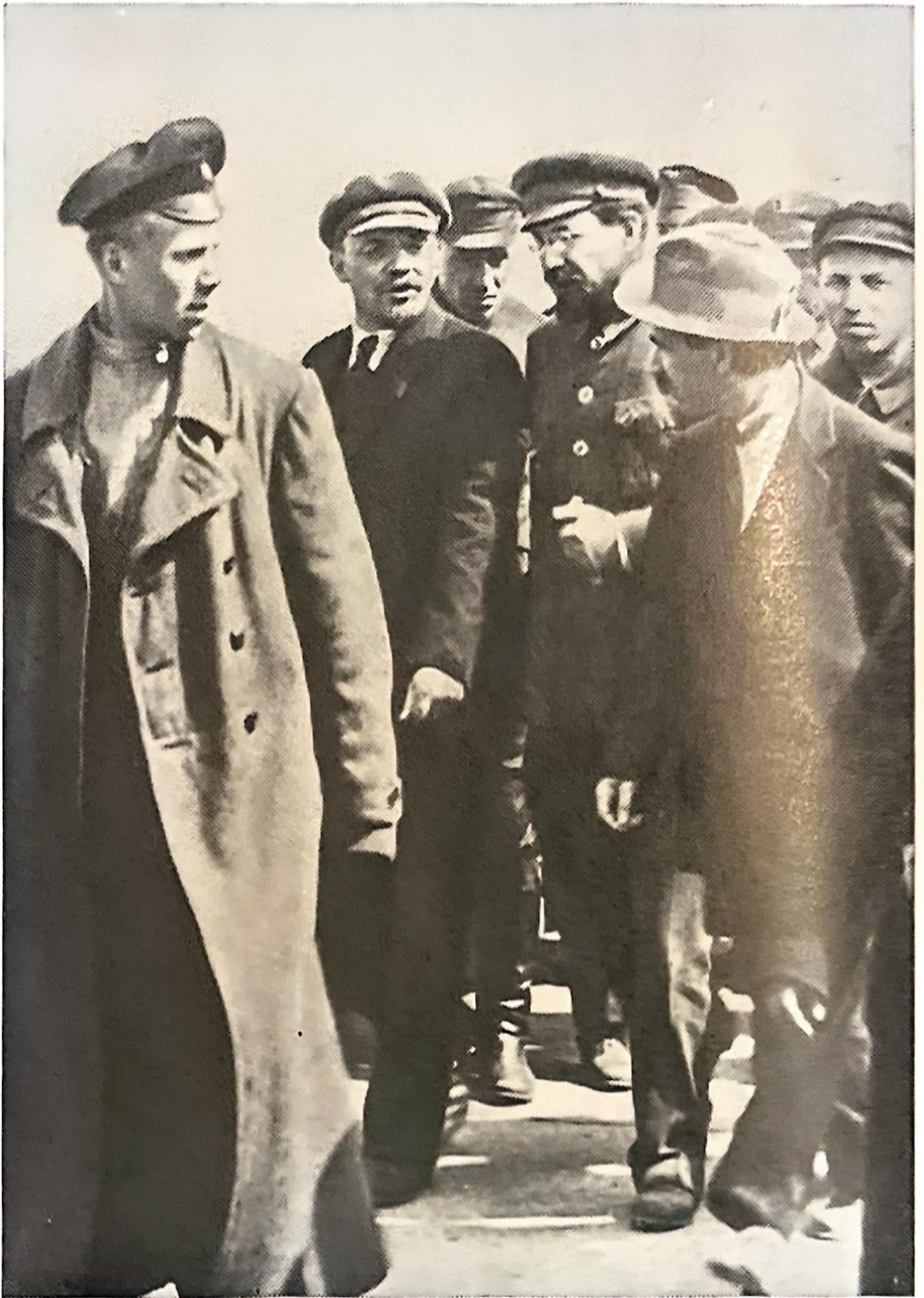
В ПОЛЬЗУ ПРОЛЕТАРСКАГО
ФИЛОСОФСЬКАГО КРУЖКА

Poster advertising Lunacharsky's lecture "In the Land of Socialism". Petrograd, November, 1917



Lunacharsky (third from the left) inspecting the agitation campaign train named after Lenin. Moscow, 1919

Lunacharsky at a subbotnik (voluntary unpaid work on days off)



Lunacharsky with Lenin after the ceremony for laying the foundation stone of the "Liberated Labour" monument in Moscow on May 1, 1920



Lunacharsky with Lenin during the laying of the foundation stone of the Karl Marx monument in Moscow on May 1, 1920



Lunacharsky
grad, 1920)

(Petro-

Lunacharsky, poet
Vladimir Mayakovsky
and Chairman of the
Committee for Cinema-
tography, D. Leshchen-
ko, after a Committee
session (1920)





Lunacharsky entertaining Moscow theatre actors (1929)



Lunacharsky and Gorky in Moscow in 1929

Gesellschaft zum Studium des neuen Russland

Lunatscharski

VIERZEHN JAHRE KULTURAUFBAU IN DER SOWJETUNION

Donnerstag, 19. Nov 1931
20 Uhr

Curiohaus (Grosser Saal)

SAAL Mitte 5 . Reihe Nr. 01
RM. 3.-

Invitation card to Lunacharsky's lecture "Fourteen years of cultural development in the Soviet Union", Hamburg, November 19, 1931

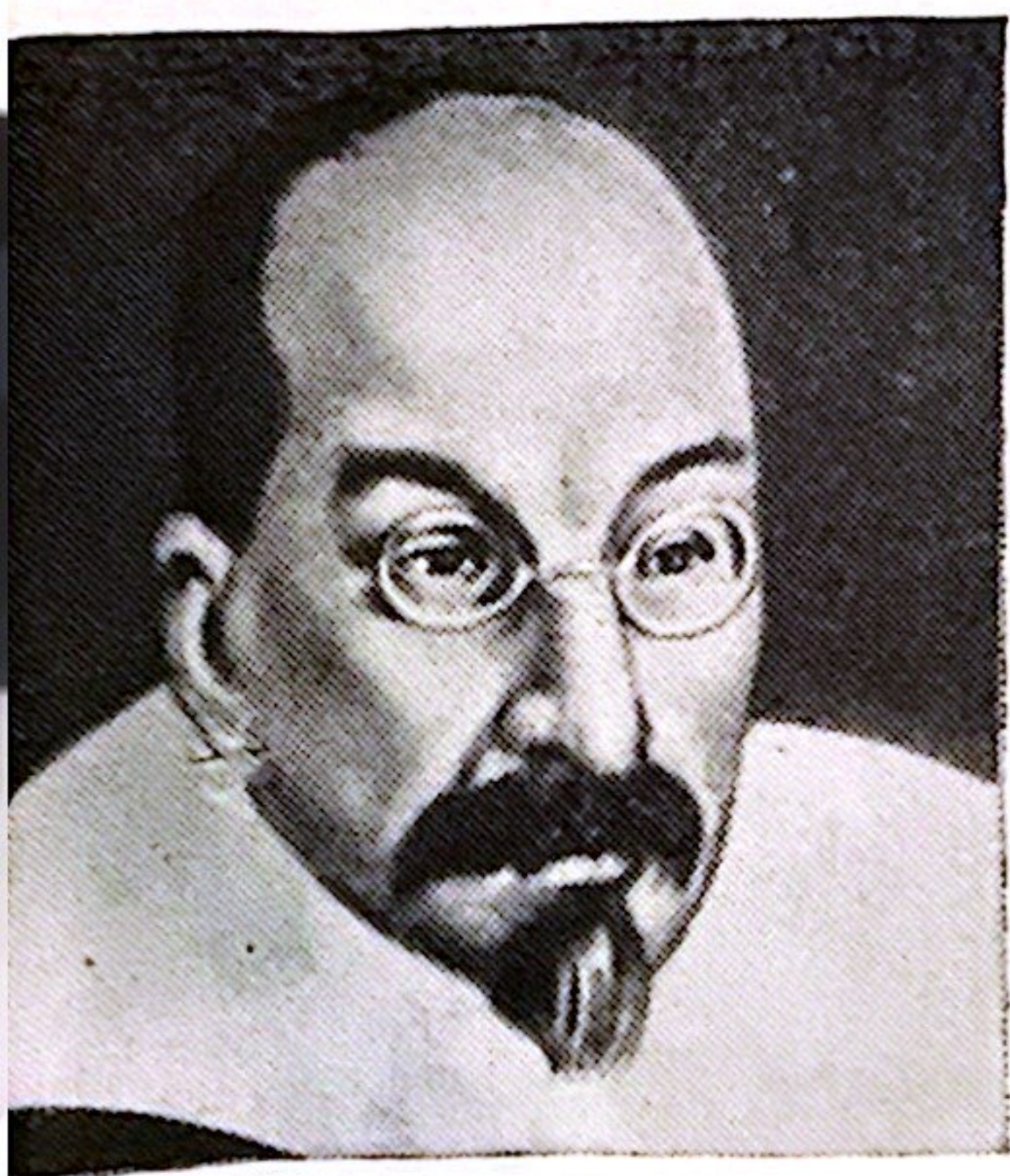


Lunacharsky with students of Workers' Faculties (1929)

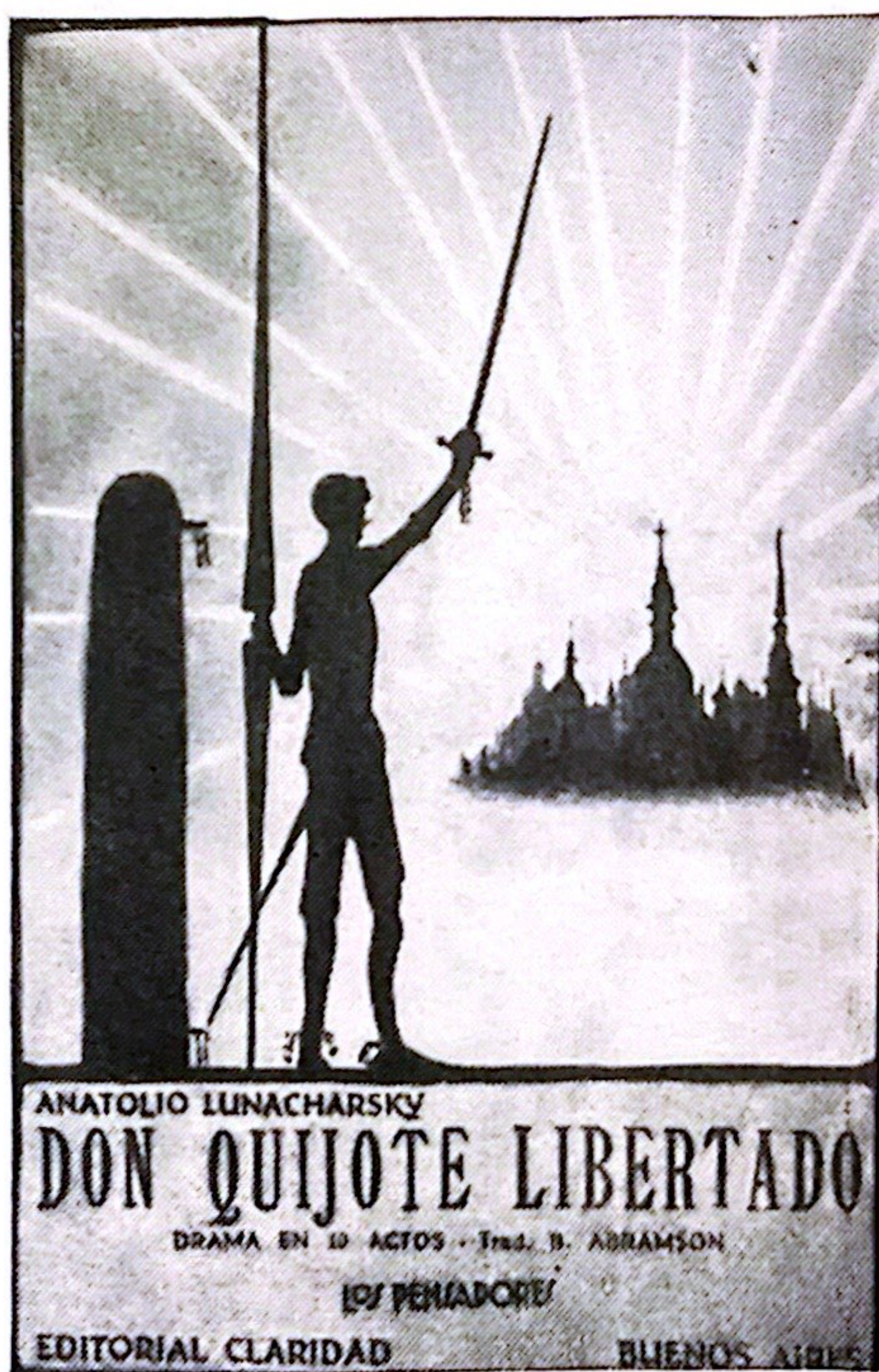


Lunacharsky, producer K. Stanislavsky, and Bernard Shaw (1931)

Lunacharsky and Romain Rolland in the villa "Olga" at Villeneuve (Switzerland) in 1932



A well-meant caricature of Lunacharsky—"Portrait of Shakespeare discovered and restored by Deni". The magazine *Prozhektor* (Search-light) No. 10, 1923



Lunacharsky's drama "Liberated Don Quixote", published in Spanish in Buenos Aires in 1930 (from his collection)



Lunacharsky at his office. Moscow, 1930

wrote about the Mistral when that poet's genius was recognized only by the inhabitants of Provence; before the Revolution he noted the great talent of Taras Shevchenko, a poet who wrote in the persecuted Ukrainian language.

Lunacharsky never tired of explaining to the masses of readers the meaning and the universal significance of the Russian classics. He supported everything that was vital in literature, painting, sculpture and music. All his articles without exception are more than informative or descriptive; in them he is not concerned merely to praise or condemn. He gave his readers his personal reactions, often of a polemical nature, to works of art, and if some of them have been forgotten, the fact remains that when they appeared they immediately became part of contemporary intellectual life, stimulating thought and animating the artistic scene.

Lunacharsky was against administrative bans and destructive, discrediting criticism except when it came to the spread of counter-revolutionary slander or frank smut. He believed that for the rest Marxist criticism was strong enough to overcome sceptical and even semi-hostile attitudes through a clear statement of Marxist communist ideas and, without denying the shortcomings in Soviet social life, to defend before the whole world the great progressive import of our struggle and labour, the significance of the communist movement.

A place of particular importance in Lunacharsky's literary legacy belongs to his articles and speeches about Lenin. Collected in two volumes entitled *Lenin* and *Lenin and Education* (1924), they present the recollections and impressions of a contemporary who was personally close to

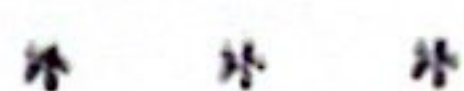
Lenin, and the reflections of a Party comrade and follower of Lenin's revolutionary theories. He repeatedly drew on and popularized the ideas of Lenin, as in his articles on Plekhanov, Chernyshevsky and Leo Tolstoy. The result of his long years of study of Lenin's teachings was the famous article "Lenin and Literary Criticism" (1932). This was the first theoretical work in the vast body of literature about Lenin which summed up Lenin's views on literature and stated the general aesthetic position of the great revolutionary and thinker. For the first time, Lenin's ideas on literature were presented in relation to his basicgnoseological principles. Since then a great deal has been written about the significance of Lenin's ideas for the development of art and contemporary aesthetics. But Lunacharsky's article is probably still the most important work on the subject.

For Lunacharsky, a born orator, thinking was closely linked with the utterance of his thoughts aloud to the accompaniment of gestures. Naturally, the art of the theatre, of spoken and visually expressed thoughts and feelings, was particularly close to him.

His own plays are rich in philosophical ideas and historico-cultural generalizations. Many of them were produced on the Soviet stage during the 'twenties: *The King's Barber* (1906); *Faust and the Town* (1918); *Oliver Cromwell* (1920); two parts of an unfinished trilogy about Tommaso Campanella, *The People* (1920) and *The Duke* (1922); *The Chancellor and the Locksmith* (1921); *Don Quixote Liberated* (a "drama for reading"—1922); *The Incendiaries* (1924); *Poison* (1926); *Velvet and Rags* (1927); *The Bear Wedding* (1923, dramatization of a story by Prosper Mérimée); and

The Napoleonic Invasion (1930, in collaboration with A. Deutsch, after the farce by the German playwright W. Hasenclever). Several were staged abroad; a German version of *Don Quixote Liberated* proved one of the best Berlin productions by the prominent director Erwin Piscator. As a playwright, Lunacharsky inclined towards melodrama and especially romantic drama in which the hero, usually a historical figure or a character taken from a literary work, is made to embody modern socio-historical and philosophical conflicts. Scenes depicting the dreams of his noble fighters for liberation from tyranny and slavery alternate with satirical exposures of obsolete social forms and ideas. Lunacharsky also left behind some 20 one-act plays, more like little dramatized stories and anecdotes.

Lunacharsky was also well known as a translator, though less so than as a dramatist. Among the poems he translated are those of Lenau (1904), Conrad Meyer (1920), Sándor Petöfi (1925) and Friedrich Hölderlin (1929).



Let us proceed now to a brief consideration of Lunacharsky's role in formulating the artistic policies of the Soviet government. In so far as space permits we shall quote his own statement on the question.

After the gloomy 'eighties, when tsarism crushed the Narodnik revolutionary movement, the intellectual and artistic forces of the country gravitated toward three positions. "On one side were the intellectuals who desired an alliance with the proletariat—the Social-Democrats and their peri-

phery" wrote Lunacharsky. "On the other side were the intellectuals who had chosen complete, firm alliance with the bourgeoisie. And in the middle was that very large cultural force which had rejected the defunct ideas of the Narodniks and at the same time 'had no desire to shout hosanna to capitalism'." We might add that this third group was by no means averse to maintaining ties with those capitalists who patronized the arts and, whether out of love for art or out of vanity (which was often the case) gave money to the theatres and individual writers and artists.

The development of capitalism had led to the appearance of a numerous intelligentsia in Russia. Engineers, doctors, lawyers and teachers sought to fashion their lives on West-European models and throw off the senseless restraints of the feudal-bureaucratic regime. But, isolated as they were from the real life of the people, they went no further in their politics than demanding bourgeois democratic liberties. They did not conceive of other, brighter prospects.

They regarded the revolution of February, 1917 as a victory over the autocracy which placed the destinies of the country in the hands of the liberal-minded bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. They rejoiced in that victory and believed that their supreme political goal had been achieved. The poverty and oppression of the masses, the fact that the bourgeois government had driven additional millions of toilers to the front to die for the benefit of the capitalists did not worry them.

The October Revolution gave power to the workers and soldiers, those "peasants in soldiers' greatcoats", and to the poor of the countryside. With rare exceptions, the intellectuals "cursed

the revolution " (Lunacharsky's words), pronounced it illegal, and refused to recognize the rule of the Bolsheviks.

Upon the establishment of Soviet power, the People's Commissar for Education addressed an appeal to the Union of Artists founded in March, 1917 and to the whole artistic community to cooperate with the new government. On November 30, 1917, the question was discussed at a plenary meeting of the Board of the Union of Artists. All who took the floor protested against the "Bolsheviks' seizure of power over art;" Mayakovsky was the only one who urged artists to "welcome the new government and establish contact with it".

Lunacharsky thereupon called a meeting of representatives of all the artistic societies and organizations of the capital. At the meeting it became clear that the only "right" the artists were willing to grant the Soviet government was that of supplying the autonomous artistic organizations with money; they did not recognize that it had any other rights over these organizations. The People's Commissar rejected their demands and replied by immediately setting up a number of new departments in the Commissariat on the fine arts, the museums, and the preservation of the treasures of the past. Lunacharsky's firm stand was bitterly denounced by the leadership of the Union of Artists.

Attempts were also repeatedly made almost from the first days of the revolution to set up a body that would regulate the publishing of books. On December 13-14, 1918, the People's Commissariat for Education held a "Special Meeting on the Literary Question". In his opening address Lunacharsky pointed out that like all state insti-

tutions the Education Commissariat was a controlling as well as an organizing body. From the aesthetic standpoint, "artistic control could be delegated to a 'senate' made up of experts," he said, "but it is important not to forget the young writers who are coming up and to make sure that the whole literary life of the country is well represented." He urged writers of different schools to join in the work of the Commissariat and not to give one school preeminence over the others. The theme of the speech was that with the support of the best representatives of the art world and the cooperation of all talented artists a healthy creative atmosphere could be generated in the country.

But the establishment of a Literary Department under the Commissariat was delayed for various reasons: the fears of some writers that that body might curtail creative freedom; the lack of paper and the inadequate printing facilities for the publication of literary works; and perhaps also the fact that Maxim Gorky, who had agreed to head the department, did not wish to move from Petrograd to Moscow.

But the next year, after the publication of books was centralized, and the classics and first editions of new authors began to come out in thousands of copies, if only on gray or at best newsprint paper, many writers were convinced that the People's Commissariat for Education was carrying out a useful and an important task, and the Literary Department of the Commissariat was established in December, 1919.

The Department was directed by a Board headed by Lunacharsky. Its functions included the regulation of such practical matters as setting the rates of pay for authors, the registration of lite-

rary associations, and so on. More fundamental issues were left to a Literary Council made up of the representatives of various literary trends and associations.

The Literary Department helped to reorient Russia's old literary forces and bring them around to the Soviet side. It also gave young writers from different social strata the opportunity to be published.

Nor can the importance of the many literary contests organized by the Department be underestimated. In 1921 it announced four all-Russia contests, for the best short stories, children's books, a "social novel consonant with the spirit of the times", and the best play. One of the terms of the contests was that the work should be "preferably, a portrayal of the life of the working people" and that the life of the other sections of the population should be "shown from the class standpoint". An absolute requirement was "genuine artistry".

Let us pause for a moment to consider that last requirement: "genuine artistry". Even in the early years of the revolution Lunacharsky constantly reminded his comrades prominent in the direction of literary affairs that the espousal of communist ideas by an author did not in itself make his book or play a work of art, and that there were many works which were perfectly acceptable as far as their social content was concerned but in which the element of preaching, of propaganda was much stronger than the element of art. "It would be extremely rash," said Lunacharsky, "to hang artificial paper flowers on the bare branches of the early spring trees, but that is exactly what the policy of encouraging pseudo-artistic revolutionary plays would amount to."

Among the other early moves of the Commissariat was the effort to induce the former imperial theatres of Petrograd and Moscow to cooperate with it, and to gain their cooperation by peaceful means. It is a fact that the state theatres of Petrograd replied to the October Revolution by going on strike, and that their strike was supported by the Artists' Union. Twice Lunacharsky addressed himself to the companies of these theatres, explaining that the new government was not asking art workers to make "any statements of loyalty and obedience". At the same time he stressed in his message to them that "the working people cannot give the state theatres their support unless they are confident that these theatres exist not for the amusement of the gentry, but for the satisfaction of the great cultural needs of the working population."

In the beginning the desire to separate art from politics, to declare art apolitical predominated among writers, actors, and painters. Those who were willing to link their art with politics could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Lunacharsky's appeal to theatrical workers to establish contacts with the new government evoked a response from only the technical personnel, and that with the reservation that they too believed art was apolitical.

It took some time for the artistic intelligentsia to accept not only with their minds, but with all their hearts, the necessity of linking art to the interests of the wide masses. The eminent Russian theatre director V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, who in December, 1918, had asserted that the slogan of linking the theatre and life spelled "the doom of art", was subsequently to state that "from the impact of a noble idea, new to the entire history

of theatrical thought, there had crystallized the irrefutable formula that art cannot be apolitical."

It was not long before the policy of the Soviet government began to yield definite results. On December 22, 1919, 1,500 actors and artists met to adopt a declaration in which they said: "We clearly see that art has never before been so highly respected and cherished as it is respected and cherished at the present historical juncture by the Soviet government in the person of the People's Commissar for Education Comrade Lunacharsky." Then they went on to say that they were not content "simply to watch the Russian proletariat straining all its energies in the struggle for its complete emancipation", but wished to place all their knowledge and talents at the service of the proletariat "in its titanical struggle on the front of the war against ignorance". They expressed their intention of "tirelessly opposing all those in our ranks who . . . try to keep us from organizing a united and closely welded front", their intention of "contributing all they could to the construction of a new, free and better life".

In other words, patience, caution, tact, the readiness to enter into frank and open discussions, a principled and firm stand on basic questions were producing the desired results, and the Education Commissariat was soon able to establish good relations with the theatres and to put an end to their part in the sabotage.

In March, 1918, government representatives and theatre workers met to adopt "The Charter of the Autonomous State Theatres". The Charter confirmed the right of Petrograd's oldest theatres to autonomous existence, a right also extended to the Maly and Bolshoi theatres in Moscow, and contained the following point: the government

retained full control of the financial affairs of the theatres, and would exercise control in artistic questions through its representatives in the Theatrical Council. That Council in turn was charged with the responsibility of driving the "poisoners of the people's minds" out of the temple of art, of "calling to life a new repertory suited to the spirit of the times and the mood of the masses", and of "giving the theatre to the people". The Theatrical Council declared that it did not feel entitled to "give the support of the state to one or another trend at the expense of its rivals".

But there was as yet no uniform system of theatrical management throughout the country. There were still municipal and private companies, the latter being predominant in the provinces and entirely dependent on greedy commercial entrepreneurs.

Many members of the theatrical community began to speak up in favour of a reform of the theatre business and the nationalization of the theatres. The problem was widely discussed in the press, at meetings of theatre companies, and at art conferences and congresses.

There were several obstacles to nationalization of the theatres. Although it was clear that private capital could no longer be allowed to control the field, nationalization entailed expenditures which would be a strain on the country's financial resources.¹ The shortage of properly trained administrative personnel for the theatres

¹ Some 3,000 new theatres and drama groups sprang up at this time in addition to the state and private theatres already in existence. Under the circumstances, a differentiated approach was the only one possible. The state theatres were to be financed by the state; other theatres were to work under the direction of the local

was another problem, for to entrust the management of the theatres to unqualified persons might lead to bureaucratic solutions of artistic problems, and create a threat to a great cultural heritage. In addition hasty and poorly planned nationalization might spoil relations between the Soviet government and the artistic intelligentsia for a long time to come.

These dangers were apparent to many, among them such great men of the Russian stage as A. Yuzhin, V. Nemirovich-Danchenko, K. Stanislavsky and A. Tairov.

Work on the decree on the theatres continued throughout March and April of 1919.

The problem was so acute and passions had grown so hot in the course of the dispute that Lenin took up the question personally. He chaired three meetings at which the Council of People's Commissars discussed the proposed decree. The wording of the final version was entrusted to Lunacharsky. On August 26, 1919, the decree of the Council of People's Commissars "On the Unification of Theatrical Affairs" was adopted and signed by Lenin and Lunacharsky.

All functions of managing the theatres on the territory of the republic and of solving practical questions relating to the development of the scenic art were assigned to a special body known as "Tsentrteatr" under the People's Commissariat for Education. That body was given the right to distribute subsidies and determine the artistic merits of each theatre. The property of the theatres was declared national property. A fundamen-

Soviets and receive irregular subsidies for staging plays for workers and soldiers or to be supported by the organizations which had created them.

tally new principle set forth in the decree was that the degree of autonomy enjoyed by a theatre depended directly on its artistic merits. Private companies were not prohibited by the state, but received subsidies and stage property only if Tsentretr found them worthy and if their administrations included representatives of the Education Commissariat. The Commissariat did not have representatives in the administration of the autonomous theatres. The extent of the state's participation in and control of the affairs of a theatre depended upon its artistic merits and usefulness. Thus for the non-autonomous theatres instructions of an administrative and artistic nature were considered necessary. In the case of the autonomous theatres Tsentretr retained the right to give them "some guidance concerning their repertories with the aim of bringing these closer to the broad masses and the latter's social ideals, without undermining the artistic standards of the theatre". That formula pointed to a conscious programme of care and respect for art.

The state theatres (the Bolshoi and Maly in Moscow, the Mariinsky, Alexandrinsky and Mikhailovsky in Petrograd) formed a special group under the Department of State Theatres of the Education Commissariat in accordance with the Charter of the Autonomous State Theatres adopted earlier and the principles worked out for each theatre. No pressure was put on them to hasten the natural process of their drawing close to the socialist ideology. They had the opportunity, in conditions of artistic independence, to find their place in the class struggle and become convinced that the new system had opened up to them the prospect of universality and genuine popularity.

The decree outlined the principles for the amalgamation of the theatres of the country and the establishment of a permanent if rather intricate administrative system. Lunacharsky was appointed the head of Tsentreteatr.

The reform of theatrical affairs enabled the best companies to bring their work into accord with the cultural aims of the proletarian revolution and reorient themselves without too much interference from above. Administrative pressure was put upon only those theatres which continued to take a parasitical or hostile stand with respect to the revolution.

The decree was well received in the theatrical world.

In itself the process of working out the decree with the participation of prominent theatrical personalities put relations between the state and art on a new footing, and proved a school of civic activity for the artistic intelligentsia.



One of the few cultural organizations to welcome the October Revolution was Proletcult.

Much has been written in the Soviet Union and abroad about the attitude of the Communist Party to Proletcult, about Lenin's statements on the subject, and his differences with Lunacharsky in 1920, especially concerning the merger of Proletcult with the People's Commissariat for Education and the question of the autonomy of Proletcult. In the limited space at our disposal, we can hardly go into the whole complicated problem, which still awaits deeper study. We shall deal here, in a general way, only with the problem of "prole-

tarian culture'' as such, and the attitude of the Proletcult group to artistic heritage. This episode in the history of Soviet culture cannot be ignored here because of the close bearing it has on the story of Lunacharsky's life and work.

Even before the revolution, the Party in its cultural and political work among the proletariat sought to bring out and develop the creative energies of the workers. The idea of setting up an organization which would popularize the achievements of culture and encourage the new trends born of the social ideals and practical struggle of the proletariat naturally led to the amalgamation of the scattered cultural groups, many of which were headed by Bolsheviki taking part in accordance with the Party's policy in all kinds of non-Party workers' activities.

The amalgamation of these cultural and educational groups of the proletariat (their clubs, courses, choral societies, art studios and circles) was finally undertaken at a conference held from October 16 to 19, 1917 in Petrograd. The general tasks and principles of the new organization which was given the name of Proletcult (proletarian culture) were outlined in the speech Lunacharsky delivered at the plenary meeting of that conference. He said that a militant socialist spirit should permeate the cultural and educational movement of the proletariat which was called upon to arm the workers with knowledge; that while expressing themselves in original creative efforts, the workers should also master the cultural riches of past and present, and draw on the help of the socialist and non-Party intelligentsia.

A serious difference of opinion came into the open at this conference between those who maintained that there was practically nothing worth

taking from the old culture and that the proletariat, after destroying it, had to create a new culture, and those, like Lunacharsky, who believed that proletarian culture would grow out of, and slowly take shape on the basis of a critical assimilation of the culture of the past.

Proletcult sprang originally from the spontaneous amateur activities of workers practising in small local, isolated groups. This cultural movement had the support of the politically groping but on the whole democratically minded intelligentsia (including some Mensheviks and even Cadets and elements close to them). But gradually the influence of educated workers and intellectuals who sympathized with the Bolsheviks began to predominate in the movement. After the overthrow of tsarism and legalization of various political parties, the pro-Bolshevik trade unions and organizations of the RSDLP(B) assumed leadership of this cultural movement of the masses and gave them an organizational framework. In a word, from its very beginnings Proletcult was an organization functioning under the ideological influence of the Bolsheviks. After the revolution, Proletcult groups proliferated in Moscow and many other Russian cities. The merger of all these groups was completed at the All-Russia Proletcult Conference of September 1918 and the first Proletcult Congress of October 1920.

However, the very first discussions that were held at the Education Commissariat in 1918 brought to light serious differences of opinion between Lunacharsky and the heads of the Proletcult. Both Lunacharsky and Krupskaya pointed to the danger of sectarianism and insularity in the Proletcult and warned against its harmful tendency of mistrusting the poor peasantry and in-

telligentsia. What the Proletcult leaders said revealed a hypercritical and biased attitude to the cultural heritage of the past and a tendency to stress the antagonism between the old and new cultures; they bore obvious traces of a vulgar sociological approach. With his unfailing fire and talent, Lunacharsky defended the importance of the classical cultural heritage for the proletariat. In the summary of his report to the First All-Russia Proletcult Conference he stressed the necessity of cultural continuity and said that "the independence of proletarian art does not consist in artificial originality but presupposes an acquaintance with all the fruits of the preceding culture". He noted that the intelligentsia also had a positive role to play in the development of proletarian art. A further aggravation of the dispute between Lunacharsky and the Proletcult seemed inevitable.

But these polemics were not all that engaged the attention of the People's Commissariat for Education then. It went on with its work, carrying out the policy of the Soviet government to preserve the most valuable works of art and architectural monuments of the past. As has been said earlier, Lunacharsky's part in that noble undertaking was tremendous.

The statements of the theorists of the Proletcult and their articles for the press offer sufficient grounds for accusing them of nihilism with respect to the cultural past. That is indisputable. But it is only fair to point out that there had not been a single instance of the Proletcult having instigated the destruction of any cultural treasures, and that while the journal *Gryadushcheye* (*The Future*) regularly attacked the *akstariye* (academic ragpicking), practically every issue of the

journal *Proletarskaya Kultura* spoke of the urgent task of mastering the cultural heritage of the past.

What, then, was the issue?

Of course, partly the trouble sprang from the rather low level of education of the masses and of many of the Proletcult leaders, from the latter's pseudo-Marxist schematizing based on plain ignorance, from their amateur theorizing. Under the influence of the criticism levelled against them by the Party and by Lunacharsky himself, and thanks to the cultural policy of the Soviet government and the experience of life itself, the necessity of mastering the cultural past came to be recognized by growing numbers of Proletcult followers and gradually even the most naive and leftist proponents of a "pure proletarian culture" began to approach the problem correctly, although traces of philistine radicalism and cultural nihilism recurred from time to time.

As is known, not only the Proletcult and the futurists were prone to nihilistic sentiments; they were present even in certain Party spheres.

The following circumstance, by no means negligible, must also be taken into consideration. The consciousness of the broad masses in those days was, on the whole, marked by a contradiction between a tremendous striving to partake of the culture that was once denied them, and a passionate hatred for the world of the exploiters and everything connected with it. The old art was associated in their minds with the whole hostile class system and regarded as one of its tools of oppression. Hence the masses' aversion to the old art and desire to create their own art which would bear no resemblance whatever to the old. But as the general cultural level and political consciousness of the people rose thanks to the ti-

tanic educational work conducted by the Party, the attitude to the past changed. In the earliest years of the revolution, however, these leftist tendencies corresponded to the psychology of the masses and the destructive tendency of the initial phase of revolution as such. How widespread they were then can be seen from Mayakovsky's poems of those years, and Meierhold's "Theatrical October", and the *proletchvanstvo* (proletarian bluster) of the group of self-styled proletarian writers known as *Na Postu* (On Guard).

Another serious threat came from the philosophical and aesthetic ideas of A. Bogdanov, the Proletcult ideologist who tried to define the philosophical basis of the new proletarian culture as a culture diametrically opposed to and qualitatively different from the old, a culture expressing the psychology of the proletariat as the class of the age of "large-scale machine production".

In his "Essays on an Organizational Science" which appeared in the journal *Proletarskaya Kultura*, Bogdanov proceeded from the premise that the ideology of the future could be constructed in the "laboratory", which was then to become the basic organizing principle of the dawning social life, its tenets and canons even shaping the reality of the future. Elements of "activism", of forcing artificially constructed schemes upon reality, run also through other of Bogdanov's works. His principle of "the manufacture of a proletarian culture" is also based on the notion that culture was no more than a definitely organized form of thinking, and that to "co-organize" the thinking, the psychology and living habits of the proletariat, special laboratories were needed where the conditions were free from non-proletarian influences. Bogdanov denied that it was the artist's task to

reflect the world in images; he said the proletarian artist and writer had to express himself and through himself the "collective psychology" and the "collective experience" of his class. The function of art was not to promote our understanding of the concrete forms of the phenomena of life, but to remake reality on the basis of structured ideals and the active, organizing role of definite ideas which anticipated the real course of events and determined those events.

The most direct conclusions from Bogdanov's conception of proletarian culture were drawn by P. Kerzhentsev in his theories on the theatre. It was the mission of the proletarian theatre, according to him, to express the new psychology of the working class; its purpose was not so much to perform for the people as to help them perform; only the proletariat preserving its true working class nature could create a proletarian theatre. As soon as the actor left the lathe to mount the stage he lost contact with his milieu and its interests and feelings. Therefore theatrical ability and skill were minor considerations for the working class actor.

Bogdanov was a member of the Central Committee of the Proletcult until the end of 1921; he was one of the editors of *Proletarskaya Kultura* and had written more theoretical articles for the magazine than any other Proletcult leader.

The question of Bogdanov's influence would be simple enough if his ideas concerned us only as they applied to the meaning of "proletarian culture", especially in the simplistic form in which he popularized them for the readers of the Proletcult press. But, for all the eclecticism of his philosophical system, which linked the unlinkable (neo-positivism and Marxism, communism

and 19th-century bourgeois sociology), Bogdanov, as said earlier, was a highly educated man, a talented propagandist and organizer, a doctor and biologist. Moreover, he was possessed of a strong personality and his conviction and sincerity made a great impression on the revolutionary workers who were not very adept as yet in theory.

Actually none but a few Proletcult theorists were familiar with Bogdanov's ideas or were aware of any coherent conception in Bogdanov's thinking on the subject; they grasped only a few expressions and isolated terms like "collectivism", "activism", etc. The leaders of the local Proletcult groups did not have the vaguest idea of what it was all about—to say nothing of the rank and file. Those leaders had more immediate concerns such as providing entertainment for the masses of workers who attended the clubs, or discovering and developing new talent, establishing new theatres and studios, and so on.

It is sometimes said that the Proletcult produced nothing but idle talk. That is hardly the case. The Moscow Proletcult gave A. Stolper, G. Alexandrov and I. Pyriev, film directors who later became famous, their start; it was the first school of the actors M. Shtrauch, A. Khanov and E. Garin, and of the dramatists A. Afinogenov and I. Shtok. The prominent Soviet playwright A. Arbuzov brought his first plays to the Proletcult. Eisenstein began as an artist and stage designer in a workers' theatre and that was where he first became a director, subsequently going over to the direction of motion pictures. His first film *The Strike*, which laid the foundations of a new stage in the development of Soviet cinema and of the new genre of the revolutionary film epic, was based on a scenario written by one of

the ideologists and leaders of the Proletcult, V. Pletnev. Its cast was made up of actors from the First Workers' Theatre and members of the staff of the Moscow Proletcult, most of whom also participated later in *The Armoured Cruiser Potemkin*. V. Smyshlyaev, A. Dikiy, M. Chekhov, S. Birman, Y. Turchaninova and other distinguished actors and directors taught in its theatrical studios. The well-known author Andrei Belyi taught budding poets the theory of writing in Proletcult courses.

In short, the Proletcult did a concrete and useful job of discovering talent among the working class youth and stimulating its development.

The young members of the Proletcult studios took their plays on tour, gave concerts and lectures in the factory clubs, shops, in army units and public squares, on the fronts of the Civil War. On August 19, 1919, the First Studio of the Moscow Proletcult left with Soviet military leader Frunze for the Eastern Front and gave concerts there for the workers and the Red Army soldiers until October 19. Between October 15, 1919, and March 1, 1920, the Second Studio performed before the troops of the Southern Front.

These theatrical studios proved the most popular with the workers. In a short time Moscow has about 20 district studios; in Moscow Region the Proletcult organized 14 studios during 1919 in which some 400 people participated. The studios conducted educational work and rehearsed new plays of a revolutionary, heroic nature.

Last but not least, the Proletcult was the first to experiment in what was later to be known as amateur art activities. The Komsomol theatres and art studios for working class youths which became widespread at the end of the 'twenties

and beginning of the 'thirties benefited greatly from the experience of these first years of the Proletcult.

It was this last aspect of its work, its encouragement of talented young workers taking their first steps in artistic creation, that Lunacharsky valued most of all in the Proletcult. It goes without saying that his political and aesthetic views, which have been discussed above, ruled out any sympathy with the fantastic idea of "a laboratory for the manufacture of a proletarian culture."

He did not regard much of the poetry created by the young workers as "pearls of creation", but he did hear in its best examples "a new word of real revolutionary pathos". His articles "The New Poetry", from which these words are taken was an analysis of the poetic output of the workers and peasants, whose merit he saw in their defence of the interests of the working class and collectivistic motives. Lunacharsky pointed out that in spite of the theories of the Proletcult, the proletarian poets were neither ignoring the achievements of the literature of the past nor succumbing to stereotype.

In the mid-twenties, Proletcult was affiliated with the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions and merged with its cultural and artistic sections.

* * *

"My revolution," said the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky in greeting the October Revolution, and in the days to follow everything he wrote was a summons to work for the revolution and a panegyric to it. His position was shared by all his friends in the literary group of futurists which

appeared at the turn of the 20th century in Russia.

Enthusiasm for the revolution can be heard in the best works of the futurist V. Kamensky, author of one of the first historical revolutionary plays, *Stenka Razin*. His play *Locomotive Mass* was a pioneer attempt to deal with the theme of labour and the working class as the basic force of historical progress. Revolutionary motives inspire the book of poems *Bomb* by the futurist N. Aseyev; his "March of Budenny" from the poem *Budenny* became a popular song.

But most adherents of the other main pre-revolutionary trends in literature (symbolism, acmeism), which counted in their ranks not a few gifted poets, did not associate themselves with progressive social ideas and, least of all, with the revolutionary movement. Thus, only a few accepted the revolution immediately. Among them were the poets S. Gorodetsky, V. Bryusov (who joined the Communist Party) and A. Blok (who welcomed the revolution warmly in his poem *Twelve*). Valery Bryusov and Alexander Blok were active in the literary and theatrical departments of the Education Commissariat. As for the imagists, with their Bohemian proclivities, verbal sleight-of-hand and lack of contact with the people—they failed to understand the revolution, and their loud demonstrations and scandals aroused indignation. As Lunacharsky said, their early publications were an insult to their own talents and to contemporary Russia.

Here it may be pertinent to say a word about the literary situation of that period, about the literary processes and trends popular in the 'twenties with various groups of writers or individual writers.

In Russia the first two decades of the present century produced a multitude of artistic groups and trends, all with their own "manifestoes", "declarations", "programmes" and "theories". None of the aesthetic, literary or other programmes of these groups filled the need for a Marxist, communist theory of aesthetics, however. Lunacharsky was convinced that in the aesthetic sphere the Communist Party offered the basic, the most important principles, although the precise formulation of a theory, of a comprehensive philosophico-aesthetic system was a task that still lay before it. As an art critic, Lunacharsky had repeatedly demonstrated the superiority of the Marxist world outlook over the various bourgeois ideologies opposed to it, the superiority of the realist approach as a basis for artistic creation over any of the anti-realist or pseudo-realist modernistic trends. As a critic, he revealed a remarkable ability, "not by mechanical means, but by means of delicate chemical analysis" (a phrase he often used) to discern all that was "relatively true, vital, capable of realistic development" in the "declarations" and "platforms" of the various groups.

An intrinsic quality of Lunacharsky's personality as a cultural leader was his flexibility, his ability to see and always to go on trying to see the ultimate possibilities of the different groups and trends in art. The strength of his critical talent can be seen even more clearly in the fact that he focussed his attention on individual artists and their individual works. A principled but unbiased approach, honesty and flexibility—such were the personal traits that left their imprint on his whole lifetime's work.

The reader may already have noticed that in

this booklet we have been considering the period between 1917 and 1925 at greater length than the later years of Lunacharsky's life. There is a reason for this. It was during that period, marked by the clash of divergent opinions, that he elaborated the basic principles which defined his position as a cultural leader. For the same reason we shall discuss briefly later on his relations with an organization what was to play an important role in Soviet literature and the political life of the country. That organization was the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, or RAPP.

But first let us return to his early activity as People's Commissar for Education and look a little more closely at the question of his relations with the futurists.

The futurists declared themselves ready to work under the leadership of the Soviet government. The social, economic and political tasks of the Soviet government, inclusive of the realm of art, were, however, by no means clear yet to them or to their most famous exponent Mayakovsky.

The approach to the cultural heritage of the past was the chief issue on which Mayakovsky and the whole futurist group clashed with Lunacharsky. During a meeting with Lunacharsky, they found that the People's Commissar did not share their view that the whole culture of the past had to be discarded, although he did agree that much in it was outworn and subject to critical revaluation. The main task, said Lunacharsky, was to preserve and cherish the very rich cultural legacy that had passed into the hands of the people. Mayakovsky and his friends were disappointed.

At the end of 1918 they turned the newspaper of the People's Commissariat for Education, *Iskus-*

stvo Kommuny (Art of the Commune) into the factual mouthpiece of their group, prominent in which were Mayakovsky, Altman, Brik and Punin. In their articles for that newspaper they aimed their attacks at the opponents of leftist art and champions of what they called *akstariye* (academic ragpicking). That was tantamount to an offensive against the policy of the People's Commissariat for Education whose newspaper *Iskusstvo Kommuny* after all was.

Lunacharsky counter-attacked in the same newspaper with his article "A Spoonful of Antidote", in which he criticized the futurists' "destructive attitude to the past and their attempt, while speaking for a definite school, to make it seem that they were speaking as well in the name of the government".

His article made it clear to the artistic world that the People's Commissariat for Education did not consider the futurists the spokesmen of the state on art, but merely one of many trends with equal rights, no more. He flatly rejected the futurists' claim to being the "state art school". The unequivocal position of the Education Commissariat and its head Lunacharsky was evident to all: "I have said dozens of times that the People's Commissariat for Education must take an impartial attitude to the different trends in our artistic life. As far as questions of form are concerned, the taste of the People's Commissar or any other government spokesmen need not be taken into consideration. Let there be free development for all artists and groups! Do not allow one trend, whether on the strength of traditional fame or stylish success, to obliterate another!"

The futurists immediately grasped the full impact of the blow aimed at them. The newspaper's

policy-makers categorically rejected the principles laid down in Lunacharsky's article. The same issue carried a rebuttal from "the editors". It said that the lines in Mayakovsky's poem *Early to Rejoice*, in which "Whiteguards" like Raphael, Rastrelli and Pushkin and the "rest of the classical generals" were taken out to be shot, should not be interpreted literally as a summons to destroy the culture of the past.

But though they defended themselves hotly, the activities and writings of the futurists evoked increasing dissatisfaction and criticism. Again and again, in March, 1919, *Izvestia* took them to task and the other newspapers and journals chided the Department of Fine Arts (IZO) of the Education Commissariat for letting the futurists "get the upper hand".

On April 6, 1919, *Pravda* published a resolution adopted by members of the Union of Scientists, Artists and Writers which said, among other things, that "In view of the fact that futurism and cubism are essentially forms of decadent bourgeois art, this meeting requests the People's Commissariat for Education to take cognizance of the unlimited sway of futurism, cubism, imagism, and their like in the Soviet Socialist Republic".

All this criticism, it need hardly be said, obliged the Commissariat to study the charges levelled against IZO.

On April 10, 1919, Lunacharsky presided over a Board meeting of the Commissariat which discussed the work of the Department of Fine Arts (IZO) and "firmly requested" the latter "to strictly maintain a general policy of regarding the different trends of art as equals".

The defense of realism and rejection of group

preferences often provoked great dissatisfaction among artists on both the left and the right (and even in certain Party circles). To some Lunacharsky's stand seemed liberal and not revolutionary enough; to others—too reconciliatory with respect to the "left". Neither understood that he was defending the Party's real position, which held that everything that showed talent should be pointed up and supported, and everything that was mediocre, dull and vulgar should be opposed, no matter how dressed up in high-sounding ideological phrases.

From the autumn of 1920 on, the passion and severity of Lunacharsky's criticism of futurism noticeably increased, and for good reason. The passage of time had not confirmed the self-confident assertions of the futurists that they, and they alone, were the "vehicles of the literary ideas of the proletariat" or that only their art could call itself proletarian art. In fact, the proletarian and peasant masses did not understand or accept futurism. This was indisputable, and Lunacharsky said as much. Formalism and futuristic grotesquerie obscured the revolutionary content and detracted from the revolutionary fervour present in many of their works, actually spoiling them. Even in the case of Mayakovsky, Lunacharsky felt that futuristic grimacing was impeding the full development and flowering of his talent. Such were the conclusions Lunacharsky drew after analyzing the art and role of the futurists by the end of 1920.

At the same time, he did not agree that the futurists should be hounded or their works banned. On November 26, 1920, he made the following important statement: "As People's Commissar I have imposed no bans on the futurists; I

say there must be freedom in the cultural sphere."

He pointed out that the "Left", including the futurists had been "in a way hounded in Russian bourgeois society. They were young, and they believed they were revolutionizing literary techniques. Naturally, they were quicker to feel sympathy for the revolution and to respond to it when it stretched out its hand to them." He explained: "I must admit that first of all this was my hand. And I stretched it out to them not because I admired their experiments. True, I did not go along with those who merely pooh-poohed the futurists, snorted and cried: Hooligans! I knew what deep social roots that peculiar plant grew from, and I by no means deny that the fruits of that plant may ultimately prove useful for the general development of art, or that their peculiar lopsidedness and over-analytical approach may in the end lead somewhere. Nevertheless, their art must be seen as a product of the disintegration of the preceding art and a field sown with the anarchistically strewn bones of the art of the future which will yet rise up whole and integrated at the trumpet call of some brilliant synthesizer. I cannot consider their art to be anything but a laboratory, a sort of kitchen... But I stretched out my hand to it because the People's Commissariat for Education had to rely in its overall policy on some serious group of creative artists, and I found them almost exclusively among the so-called left artists."

Lunacharsky's stand on art, which may not have been perfectly consistent in one isolated instance or another, but which was on the whole a

correct stand, was assailed from various sides during the entire period we are considering.

By the proponents of proletarian art he was accused of abandoning the Party position. They disapproved of his broad-minded approach to art. These were the years which produced the legend of his liberalism and inordinate tolerance in questions of literature and art. There were continual complaints against him: That in the fine arts too much leeway was being given to the "Leftists"—and who were they but the sculptor S. Konenkov and the painter P. Konchalovsky! That Mayakovsky was over-rated—and he became a great poet! That too much fuss was being made about Meierhold—and in 1923 he was awarded the title of People's Artiste of the Republic. That with the connivance of the Education Commissariat, Eisenstein had entrenched himself in Prolet-cult in order to spread all kinds of nonsense—and his films were soon to be acclaimed by the whole world!

Lunacharsky said: "It is not the business of the state authorities to artificially restrain the growth of the artistic schools brought into being by life itself." That did not mean that criticism of those schools was ruled out, and Lunacharsky never evaded his responsibilities as a critic.

On the other extreme the advocates of "left art" showered him with abuse for what they called his conservatism and passivity. They pronounced him (groundlessly) their enemy as People's Commissar and (with perfectly good grounds) their enemy as literary critic. In actual fact Lunacharsky was the first to point out Mayakovsky's remarkable gifts and predict a great future for him, and that was before the Party press even began to take the poet seriously. It was Lu-

nacharsky who early in the 'twenties called Mayakovsky "the foremost Russian poet of our times", he gave Mayakovsky his unfailing help, in word and deed, in spite of Mayakovsky's repeated attacks on him as Commissar, as critic, and as author.

It remains to be said in tribute to Lunacharsky's qualities as a man and a public figure that although such attacks, often insulting in the extreme, dismayed him, they did not in the least influence his opinion of one or another author or prominent personality.

When some of the futurists began to accept realism of content and show sincere desire to be of service to Soviet society, the Central Committee of the Party responded, in February, 1922, by advising the State Publishing House (Gosizdat) to support "the Mayakovsky group". In January, 1923, that group asked the Central Committee to permit the publication of the journal *LEF* (Left Front), and permission was granted.

Summing up his attitude to left art, Lunacharsky wrote in June, 1925: "Every time an attack on futuristic or LEF art was mounted, even from high Party bodies, the Education Commissariat unfailingly defended its right to exist and develop. But the Commissariat never failed to warn the LEF group against certain of their tendencies, to disclose their roots which link them with the hangovers of bourgeois culture, to remind them that bizarre trappings went with a lack of content, and that as the new post-revolutionary content of our life increased, realism would be strengthened in our midst..."

But at the same time Lunacharsky acknowledged that "...post-revolutionary realism... has become freer than before and less dependent

upon the imitation of reality; it has introduced a great many artifices that are useful for the theatre; in a way one may consider that the contribution of left art."

What, then, was Lunacharsky's objection to futurism? He understood the "socio-physiological" causes of the "blemishes" on the face of futurism (its meaningless verbal exercises which smacked of the last stages of decadence, incapable of anything but superficial and deceptive virtuosity). The Russian futurists had turned away from the bourgeoisie to accept the revolution and socialism, but they had brought with them their old verbal "trickery", "buffoonery", "grimacing", as he put it. The old manners and poses stuck, conflicting sharply with the rich subjects and feelings generated by the revolution. Their "futuristic fireworks" blinded them to the deeper currents of the new life and prevented them from seeking and analyzing new themes, from dealing with new problems and the crisis of conscience their contemporaries were facing, from getting their true bearings in the real world.

The futurists' prospectus for proletarian art threw out the concept of ideological art in general. The futurists rejected what they called the obsolete artistic heritage and declared their art the only art of the future and the only proletarian art of the present. Even the best of them made a show of superficial stylistic effects and contempt for what they called "psychologisms", thus obscuring the meaning of their work. The working class found it difficult and could not understand the ideas and feelings expressed in it.

Such was Lunacharsky's diagnosis of the disease of futurism, its causes and its effects.

Yet he never closed his eyes to the possibility

of the dialectical transformation of that "school", as ever demonstrating his desire to preserve everything of value. And though he was quite convinced that neither LEF nor the futurists had the key to the future of art, he did not fail to give them credit for what was new and original in their work.

Communism and the proletariat could and already were re-educating the futurists, said Lunacharsky. The next step was to keep moving away from formalism and find the simplest and most effective ways of expressing the new content.

The most sincere and talented theatre workers on the left were coming to realize that forced, distorted forms did not make new theatre, that all the new theatre needed was a new repertory with new content reflecting the experiences of the toiling masses. And so they gradually began to feel about for the new revolutionary content with its inevitable effect on form.

The magnificent upsurge of the revolution produced grandiose ideas. It was an upsurge of immense scale. In the early stages of the revolution everything that was petty was abhorrent to it. It called for great things, not microscopic ones, as Lunacharsky liked to say. The futurists too sensed this and tried to be part of the turmoil and excitement of the revolution.

The stump-oratory side of the futurists' poetry (the drum-like rhythm of the lines, the clever puns and effective play on words) was well suited to the revolutionary temper. Futurism produced the placard and the skilfully staged mass rally. It adapted its forms ably to the placard-and-meeting phase of the revolution.

Lunacharsky noted that the LEF futurists had sensed the new tempo of life, had caught the new

cadences of speech heard on the streets of the big cities. He called them "the strongest urban group", and the cities were bound to play an important role in the life of the country.

Lunacharsky's analysis of futurism was correct, for many of its exponents later became prominent writers, poets and dramatists.



The writings of Marx and Engels on aesthetics and literary criticism reached the Russian reader much later than their economic and political works. Even in the 'twenties it was the belief that except for *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* there was nothing on literature and art in the classics of Marxism. The statements of Marx and Engels on those subjects did not become widely known until the 'thirties. The same was true of Lenin's aesthetic views, expressed in his speeches and articles for various newspapers and journals; these first began to influence our thinking in the middle of the 'twenties.

Although the fundamental Bolshevik principles on art are predicated by the laws of social development and the theory of reflection and other basic teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, the policies of the ruling revolutionary Marxist party on art had to be concretely formulated and tested after the revolution against the experience accumulated by the new state. It could hardly have been otherwise, for conditions after the revolution were very unusual and the political situation was subject to constant change.

That the Party was able, under the very difficult conditions following the revolution, to elaborate an art policy so quickly and thoroughly and apply it so consistently in spite of the contradictory forces in operation is further proof of the intellectual strength of the Party of Lenin, its ability to pose and solve problems swiftly and effectively.

During the Civil War and period of war communism the Party's art policy was enunciated in the speeches of Lenin, the instructions Lenin gave Lunacharsky, the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars, the decisions of the 8th Party Congress (March, 1919), and the documents concerning the Proletcult.

The Party Programme adopted at its 8th Congress stressed the importance of making available to the working people all the art treasures which the exploitation of their labour had made possible but which until then had been the exclusive property of the exploiters. The implications of that statement were tremendous. In it the Party was speaking for the continuity of artistic development and emphatically against the rejection and down-grading of the old art, against the assertion that it was unnecessary and even harmful for the new society. The main thing now, said the Party, was for the people to be given the opportunity to partake of the achievements of culture and art.

In its message of December 1, 1920, "On the Proletcults" the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party urged art workers to resist alien influences in the ideological and artistic spheres. Young workers (and not only they) should "study hard" and strengthen their "communist approach to all problems of life and art",

should master the cultural heritage and apply the new methodological principles creatively. Most significant was the Party's firm declaration, in this message, of its support for "genuine, not artificial proletarian culture".

Lenin's theory of the cultural revolution was based on his analysis of the economic, social, political and cultural life of society in the period of imperialism and transition to socialism.

His plan for the cultural revolution envisaged the rebuilding of the whole pattern of cultural life, the all-round participation by the working people who were constructing socialism in independent historical creativity, the transformation of man into a conscious promoter of the cultural-historical process. That meant that the working people had to be emancipated from cultural as well as economic slavery, given access to all the material and spiritual values created by mankind, and be drawn into the management of production and all social and political processes.

Lenin's position on the question of the aims, substance and methods of building the new, or, as it was then called, proletarian culture differed fundamentally from that of the Proletcult. His theory of the cultural revolution was perfected in the course of the struggle against the inventions of the Proletcult ideologists and a critical examination of their views.

Lenin realized that under the complicated conditions then prevailing only the transformation of the political, social and economic realities could in the final analysis influence the attitudes of the artistic intelligentsia and the future course of literary and artistic developments. That is why the Party's critique was directed not only against anti-Soviet political acts and deviations. It exhort-

ed the artistic intelligentsia to rally to the cause of socialist construction; it called for the education of young writers and re-education of the older section of the artistic intelligentsia. That is why Lenin came out so strongly against the Proletcult and the futurists' mistaken ideas on the subject of culture.

Lenin was annoyed with and often angry at the theorists of the Proletcult and the futurists for turning their backs on the achievements of human thought and culture. He called for "not the *invention* of a new proletarian culture, but the *development* of the best models, traditions and results of the *existing* culture, *from the point of view* of the Marxist world outlook and the conditions of life and struggle of the proletariat in the period of its dictatorship." ¹ Only the process of assimilating and re-working everything of value. . . in the history of human culture, he said, "can be recognized as the development of a genuine proletarian culture". ²

Lenin signed a series of decrees on the preservation of artistic relics and proposed a plan of propaganda through monumental art. During a conversation with Clara Zetkin in the autumn of 1920, he spoke of the right and obligation of the Party and the state to guide the development of art. Particularly noteworthy was Lenin's demand that writers and artists keep in mind the workers and peasants for whom they were producing their works of art.

And how often Lunacharsky spoke in this vein: Write books, music, plays, paint pictures for people with different educational back-

¹ Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 42, p. 217.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 317.

grounds, and don't lose sight of the goal of developing and improving the aesthetic tastes of the masses, of helping them to rise to the level of understanding and enjoying the world classics. Artists must see their true mission as artists to lie in working for the new reader, listener, spectator; they must turn away from formalism and stop striving for technical innovations. Learn to live one life with, and share the thoughts and feelings of, the people who are building the new society!

The Soviet government spared no efforts to bring art to the masses, to the proletariat. For instance, during the four theatrical seasons from 1918 to 1922, three theatres in Petrograd, the former Mariinsky and Alexandrinsky theatres and the Maly Opera House, distributed 1,602,000 tickets free of charge or at less than a third of the box-office price. About 870,000 of those tickets went to workers' organizations, 330,000 to the army, and 400,000 to the schools. In that period, these theatres gave 622 performances to which tickets were distributed by the trade unions.

These theatres played to grateful and enthusiastic audiences, audiences which perhaps sometimes misunderstood what was happening on the stage, or understood it after their own lights, but then—had previous audiences been all-understanding? Had not actors suffered before from the indifference of spectators to the play they had poured all their talents and energies into? At least the new audiences were never indifferent! And the question remained: might not the new public's "misunderstanding" have reflected a new and perhaps higher kind of understanding?

The recollections of that period left us by theatrical personalities, artists and writers present

a thrilling picture of the mighty cultural upsurge of the first years of Soviet power. But that is a subject that would take us too far afield from our immediate task, which is that of describing Lunacharsky's role in formulating the artistic policies of the Soviet government.

Lenin's plan of enlisting bourgeois specialists in socialist construction; Lenin's idea of learning from capitalism in order to build socialism; his criticism of the utopian desire to rid the workers overnight of the filth of the old world, of the psychology of capitalist society; Lenin's teaching on the guiding and mobilizing role of the working class in relation to the great masses of toilers and the exploited—all these principles argued basically against the Proletcult's theories about a "pure" proletariat and a "pure" proletarian art. The stand Lenin and the Party took in 1919, 1920 and 1921 against the Proletcult and the futurists was a stand in defense of the future of culture and the development of genuine proletarian literature and art.

As noted earlier, Lunacharsky analyzed and discussed the problems of proletarian culture in his writings from the standpoint of Lenin's ideas.

In the course of the discussion on proletarian culture which unfolded in the pages of the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* in the autumn of 1922, a discussion closely followed by Lenin, none of the participants (among whom were Krupskaya, Pletnev, Yakovlev and Lunacharsky) expressed doubts as to the actual possibility and necessity of a proletarian culture. But as the discussion continued after 1922, new notes crept into it. In his book *Literature and Revolution*, L. Trotsky denied the very possibility and necessity of proletarian culture or proletarian art.

Lunacharsky took issue with him, and a controversy flared up in the press and on the rostrum.

Because of the incorrect approach of many Proletcult leaders to the question of the creation of proletarian culture and art, and because certain Party leaders denied the very need for proletarian culture, Lunacharsky decided to go deeper into the problem. In his theses "On Proletarian Culture" he pointed out that the proletariat as a class with its own highly distinctive economic and social features and its own way of life could hardly be satisfied with the old art; neither could it be satisfied with the "oppositional" art of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia... even if the latter had been influenced by the proletariat.

"The proletariat is extremely interested in the creation of new cultural forms," said Lunacharsky. "Of course, the creation of these new forms is inevitable from the socialist standpoint. But the consciousness with which the proletariat has been forging its revolution ever since the foundation of Marxism has prompted it to think as well about the conscious direction of the emerging new way of life, and, with it, new approaches to the understanding of the world and its artistic reflection."

Replying to Trotsky, he advanced the following cogent argument in support of the possibility and inevitability of the appearance of a proletarian culture: "The objection that the proletariat has brought with it not its own class culture, but universal non-class culture, will not stand up to criticism. In the proletarian state (the Soviet system), the proletarian sociology and philosophy (Marxism), the proletarian civic organizations (the trade unions and cooperatives) we

have powerful bulwarks of the new proletarian culture. And these will not at all fit into the universal socialist system, in which there will be neither the state... nor many of the other things which are now infinitely valuable precisely as features of our class culture manifested in everyday life. The interval of time which will elapse between the seizure of power by the proletariat and the setting up of the proletarian dictatorship and the establishment of a communist system, is bound to be long. The present era cannot and should not be without its culture. The only thing that may be granted, though the future alone can tell how far this process will go, is that perhaps the purely class, proletarian features of its culture will not reach their maximum development, but will begin to acquire a universal socialist character along the road of class development."

That disposes of the argument that "the proletariat is a class which is too oppressed to develop its own culture. Before our eyes the proletariat is being changed from an oppressed class into the leading class which will, however, yet remain a clearly defined class for many a decade to come."

Lunacharsky never tired of pointing up the danger of *proletchvantsvo* (proletarian bluster) or that of nihilism. He said it would be a disaster for the proletariat if "from indisputably correct premises it drew the incorrect conclusion that only the new cultural forms which it or its supporters created were of interest to it, and that it could dismiss the whole cultural environment in which it now found itself as being alien, hostile, even harmful to its class. Lenin strongly criticized that misconception which harbours the danger of replacing the normal development of the pro-

letarian culture on the basis of assimilation of the culture of the past by newly-hatched falsifications. Before creating its own culture, or more correctly, as the first shoots of that culture began to appear, the proletariat must do a tremendous job of studying, that is, of assimilating the old culture."

Noting that members of the other classes who had sincerely identified themselves with the proletariat could become prominent figures in the culture of the proletariat, Lunacharsky, the theorist of proletarian culture, vigorously denounced the notion that the new culture had to be built only by the forces of proletariat: "Petty-bourgeois and above all peasant and intellectual elements will remain for a long time to come at the side of the proletariat. These elements, as Marxists have repeatedly pointed out at various times, are not necessarily hostile to the proletariat; on the contrary, the proletariat can only be victorious if it wrests the hegemony over those classes from the bourgeoisie and becomes their leader. Inasmuch as these numerous groups, with their highly educated section, are the groups from which cultural workers and artists are drawn, the proletariat can hardly want to place them in a state of siege and deny them freedom to create. On the contrary, such petty bourgeois and peasant art which develops within the framework of the proletarian dictatorship can prove to be an extremely useful, supplementary cultural source."

We would be guilty of misrepresenting facts if we failed to say that not everything was clear to Lunacharsky in the first years of the revolution. For a while he did overestimate the role and importance of the Proletcult in the development of the new culture and art. He and Lenin had brief

tactical arguments about the degree and form of merging the People's Commissariat for Education with Proletcult.

But neither his real errors nor those that were ascribed to Lunacharsky in questions of the new culture represented deviations from the line of the Party; they were part of a search for the correct road to the unknown. If some of his views proved mistaken, they were but isolated episodes in the huge positive contribution of the first People's Commissar for Education. His theoretical work and practical activity in the domain of culture and art constitute an elaboration and the implementation of the ideas of Lenin.

The basic policies of the People's Commissariat for Education were formulated by Lunacharsky at a joint meeting of the Board of its Art Department, and the presidium and communist faction of the Central Committee of the Art Workers' Trade Union which was held on October 29, 1920. They were (1) Preservation of the real treasures of the art of the past. (2) Their critical assimilation by the proletarian masses. (3) Utmost encouragement of the creation of experimental forms of revolutionary art. (4) Utilization of all forms of art for the popularization and implementation of the ideas of communism, and also promotion of the spread of communist ideas among the mass of art workers. (5) An objective approach to all artistic trends. (6) Democratization of all art institutions, making them accessible to the wide masses.

Lunacharsky also suggested that a joint declaration be composed by the Education Commissariat and the Central Committee of the Art Workers' Trade Union to promote agreement on questions of art. Their declaration was published

a month later under the heading "Theses on Basic Policies in the Sphere of Art" and was signed by People's Commissar Lunacharsky and Chairman of the Art Workers' Trade Union Central Committee Y. Slavinsky. The declaration recognized "the full right of the proletariat to reconsider all elements of world art" and to rid the artistic heritage of "all admixtures of bourgeois decadence and corruption". It stated that "the new proletarian and socialist art can be built only on the foundation of all the acquisitions of the past", of the genuine treasures of the old culture. At the same time "cultural and artistic work must be directed towards the creation of purely proletarian artistic forms and institutions, and in every way assist the existing or upcoming workers' and peasants' studios in their search for new roads in the fine arts, music, the theatre and literature." As in the decisions of the 8th Party Congress, the declaration stressed that "all spheres of art must be used to enrich and vividly illustrate our political and revolutionary propaganda work".

The following fundamental principle was laid down in the declaration: "There now exist several trends in art. The proletariat is only beginning to work out its own artistic criteria, and therefore neither the government nor the trade unions should regard any one of the above trends as the state trend; at the same time the quest for the new in art should be given every assistance".

"Communist ideas should be disseminated among art workers, while the tastes and creative abilities of the masses are to be developed by making art a part of their daily lives and of the large field of production."

The document summed up the concrete experience of Party and government work in the fine arts, the theatre and literature. It proceeded from the Education Commissariat's policies on futurism and the Proletcult which had proved correct in practice, from various Party documents, the decrees of the Council of People's Commissars and Lenin's injunctions. In this document there was clearly formulated the basic policy of the Soviet state in the sphere of art, which was to pass the test of time.

The beginning of the 'twenties saw writers and artists who had achieved maturity and fame before the revolution embark upon a gradual, sometimes tortuous process of reorientation.

Meanwhile hundreds of young writers and artists were entering the arena of art, bringing with them from the fronts of war and struggle new experiences of life and a new artistic approach. New journals sprang up one after another, all kinds of almanacs and books appeared. There were over thirty literary societies in Moscow alone at the beginning of the 'twenties, and many more in Petrograd and the large provincial towns of Russia. Quite a few were small in membership but influential thanks to the outstanding talent of the members, among them were the "Kuznitsa", "Serapion Brothers" and "Left Front" (LEF) and, later, "The Constructivists' Literary Centre" and "Pereval". Others became quite large associations, such as the "All-Russia Society of Peasant Writers", and "Moscow Association of Proletarian Authors" (MAPP), and then, later, the "Russian Association of Proletarian Authors" (RAPP).

Almost every group considered it a duty and obligation to issue theoretical platforms and ma-

nifestoes and to propagate, if not to enforce, their ideas in fierce struggle with the others. We have already seen from the example of the Proletcult and futurism that diverse theories did exert an influence on the process of artistic creation, but the process itself proved broader than these theories, and often refuted them.

Of great importance for the development of literature in the first half of the 'twenties, and for the formulation of the Party's policies on art was the discussion which unfolded in the years from 1922 to 1925. By then there already existed a body of literature on the basis of which the participants in the discussion could trace the overall post-revolutionary trends. It embraced the poetry of the proletarian poets, LEF, Mayakovsky; the *Partisan Tales* of Vsevolod Ivanov, Libedinský's *One Week*, the prose works of B. Pilnyak, A. Neverov, K. Fedin, L. Seifullin, and F. Gladkov, Gorky's *Autobiographical Stories*, A. Tolstoi's *Aelita*, Furmanov's *Chapayev*, Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*, the poems of the Komso-mol poets, and so on; there were also the various manifestoes and declarations of the literary groups. Gradually opinions polarized and two distinct camps appeared among Party workers concerned with the sphere of literature.

The revolutionary and communist A. Voronsky, editor of the journal *Krasnaya Nov* and director of the Krug Publishing House, headed the group which held that artists must take a definite ideological position, that the classical heritage was essential to the development of Soviet literature, that objective nature and the specific nature of artistic creation were primary considerations, and that young talent must be given every encouragement. At the same time, Voronsky greatly un-

derestimated the role of the artist's world outlook and was prejudiced against the proletarian writers, sharing the Trotskyite view that the creation of a proletarian culture was not possible.

The other camp consisted of the critics and theorists associated with the journal *Na Postu* and the RAPP (G. Lelevich, S. Rodov, etc.) who put the ideological and educational function of literature and the writer's world outlook first, repudiated the mystical and decadent elements in the literature of the period, and objected to the negative attitude to proletarian writing. Their vulgarization of these and other questions reduced, however, their good intentions to naught, and actually did the cause of literature considerable harm. They had a narrow and simplistic interpretation of the class character of art and the paths along which proletarian literature would evolve. They tried to reduce the principle of Party guidance of art to petty regulations and administrative bans. They were inclined to ignore the specific nature of artistic creation, and were given to communist bluster and sectarianism, to the use of reprehensible methods ("the RAPP bludgeon") in their struggle with those who did not share their views. This group of literary theorists and critics maintained that the Party had no literary policy and that it befell them to define the policy of the Party and speak in its name.

The controversy was to have been expected. The development of culture and art during the immediate post-revolutionary period had been very contradictory and complicated. Of course, there were artists who said: "My revolution!" But there were not a few who rather lost their bearings, did not accept the aims of socialism

or the road leading to it, succumbed to scepticism, doubts, mysticism, or were so alienated that they tried to hide from the realities of the revolution.

Under such complicated conditions, the Party had not only to curb hostile political acts and criticize ideological deviations and quirks, but to rally writers around the tasks of socialist construction, encourage young talent, and reorient and win over the "old" artistic intelligentsia.

This Leninist approach to cultural policy was reflected in the Party documents adopted during the first half of the 'twenties. In February, 1922, the Central Committee of the Party held a special meeting to discuss the question of "The Struggle Against Petty-Bourgeois Ideology in the Publishing Field". There the State Publishing House was asked to support the group of proletarian writers, the Mayakovsky group and the Serapion Brothers publishing house provided the Serapions did not take part in reactionary publications.

Early in May, 1924, the press department of the Central Committee convened a conference on Party policy in the field of literature. The heated debate and clash of opinions which marked that conference were reminiscent of earlier discussions on proletarian culture. The untenable concepts of *Na Postu*, its disregard for the specific nature of artistic creativity, its primitive interpretation of the political content of a work of art, and its call for the establishment of "an extraordinary literary commission" to extirpate bourgeois influences not only made the position of this group vulnerable, but placed the very problem of proletarian literature in a false light. Its sectarian and narrow-minded views were just as dangerous as

the "liquidationism" of Trotsky and his followers, noted Lunacharsky in his criticism at the conference of the two extremes brought to light by the literary discussion. His position was endorsed by the writers whose letter was read out at the conference. The letter, signed by thirty-seven writers, among them V. Katayev, B. Pilnyak, S. Essenin, I. Babel, A. Tolstoi, M. Prishvin, V. Inber, N. Tikhonov, V. Ivanov, V. Shishkov, M. Zoshchenko, and V. Kaverin, said:

"We believe that the road of contemporary Russian literature, and hence our road, is one with Soviet post-revolutionary Russia. We believe that literature must hold the mirror to the new life around us . . . and at the same time express the personality of the writer. We believe that the talent of the writer and his consonance with the times are his two chief merits. . . We welcome the new writers, the workers and peasants now starting out in literature. We are not in any way setting ourselves up against them and do not look on them as hostile or alien to us. Their efforts and our efforts are the joint efforts of modern Russian literature, which is travelling one road to one goal.

"We are the ones who have suffered the most from our own mistakes. But we must protest against the blanket attacks which have been made on us. The tone of journals like *Na Postu*, their criticism (which, by the way, they have been passing off as the opinion of the Communist Party as a whole), shows a biased and false approach to our writings. We must say that such an approach to literature is unworthy of either literature or the revolution, and is demoralizing the masses of writers and readers."

The letter proved that more and more writers among the so-called fellow-travellers had embraced the Soviet way of life and made it something very near and dear to them, that a progressive qualitative change was taking place among the artistic intelligentsia in favour of the revolution and the Communist Party.

The resolution submitted by the assistant-head of the press department of the Central Committee of the RCP(B), Y. Yakovlev, and adopted by the conference, reflected Lenin's fine and subtle understanding of the need for a thoughtful, cautious approach in literary matters. The main points of the resolution may be summed up as follows:

(1) The Party should orient itself primarily on the creativity of the worker and peasant writers who have come to literature from the lathe and plough, and on those members of the intelligentsia who joined the Communist Party during the years of war communism. Its help to them should be immeasurably increased.

(2) The Party's previous approach to fellow-travellers, its line of supporting the most talented among them and encouraging them to engage in comradely joint work with the communists, should be maintained. The conference disapproves of the methods the journal *Na Postu* has been using in its fight against the fellow-travellers.

(3) The question of putting the Party's criticism into practice should receive more thought and the analysis of literary works in our newspapers and journals be made more systematic and fundamental.

(4) No one literary trend or group has the right to speak in the name of the Party.

Lunacharsky repeatedly called for a broad discussion of the Party's policy in the domain of art. As he said in 1925: "We have too many different opinions on art, too many different trends... I do not mean to imply that the Party has to work out its own view on art and pronounce those whose viewpoint is different heretics. But we must clarify the question of where the main Marxist line is going, of what is the mainstream."

Lunacharsky had an ingrained abhorrence of "communist bluster", of an overbearing "tone of command" towards intellectuals, dangers against which Lenin so often warned. He never tired of stressing the importance of being able to differentiate between what was acceptable and what was unacceptable in art, what was consciously and what was unconsciously hostile, of recognizing what was objectively harmful even in the revolutionary camp itself. Replying to the perpetual complaint that the Education Commissariat did not know how to give orders and was too lenient and conciliatory with respect to the non-proletarian artists, and that it lacked a "hard line", Lunacharsky said: "The Party's policy on art has never been non-interference in artistic affairs, but neither has it been to issue orders." He felt that the specific nature of artistic creation and of the creative personality of the artist called for very sensitive and thoughtful guidance. In that connection he often in his speeches and articles recalled Marx's attitude to Heine and Lenin's attitude to Maxim Gorky.

He gave much thought to the Party's role in the cultural domain and did a great deal to define the theoretical and practical aspects of the question. Speaking of the artist, he pointed out

that by his work as well as his civic approach to one or another problem, the artist inevitably invaded the realm of social life, thereby making himself and his output subject to political appraisal. In a proletarian socialist society, such appraisal was the prerogative of the political party responsible to the working people for the construction of the new society. The leading role of the Party was further predicated by the fact that the new society was being built by the people led by the working class on the basis of scientific theories which were being elaborated, again, by the Party of the proletariat. As the vanguard of the most progressive class of society whose interests coincided with the trend of historical development, the Communist Party was invested with authority and prestige. Its leaders were highly cultured men who had been standing at the helm of state since the very first days of the revolution and whose learning and intellectual attainments had gained for them the admiration of the whole world.¹ Therefore "the proletarian class cannot permit literature to grow like mushrooms in a forest. It is natural for the proletariat, the new and rising class, to regard life like gardeners, like cultivators."

As previously noted, in addition to defining the ideological and aesthetic principles of Soviet art, the literary discussion highlighted the question of the future of socialist literature and the

¹ Col. Raymond Robins, head of the American Red Cross Mission to Russia in 1917, noted that the first Council of People's Commissars was superior to any other cabinet of ministers in the world with respect to the number of books authored by its members, the number of languages they spoke, their intellectual attainments and learning.

role the proletarian and peasant writers and fellow-travellers would have in it. It became necessary to sum up all the valuable ideas brought out in the discussion and to overcome the extremism of the polemics. On February 5, 1925, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee set up a commission headed by I. Vareikis (of which Lunacharsky was made a member) to study the question of proletarian writers.

At its first meeting on February 13, the commission decided to make the theses presented by Vareikis the basis of its forthcoming resolution on Party policy in the realm of literature. Lunacharsky had a big part in drafting that very important Party document, as in all the work of the commission.

Lunacharsky's position with regard to representatives of the old, often called bourgeois art, was clear and unchanging from the first days of the revolution.

No less clearly defined was his stand on the new currents in art: it was "to try to actively support any innovations which are obviously useful for the development of the broad masses, and never to prevent the growth of the new, even if doubtful, beginnings, lest we make the mistake of killing something that deserves to live though still young and weak."

In those years (and the same is observed to-day) both those who were for naturalism, which is actually a parodying of realistic art, and those who were for the "avant-garde" misinterpreted the complexity of Lunacharsky's position on the different trends in art. To the former he was an orthodox "AKHRR-ite" (AKHRR—the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia); to the latter—a patron, or semi-patron, of "leftist"

modernism. Both were wrong, as all his writings prove. Lunacharsky had a rare talent for generalization which was based on the most subtle differentiation.

When expressing his personal views and feelings about the struggle of the various aesthetic trends in contemporary art, he defended the realistic tradition as a whole, and, like the classics of Marxism-Leninism, he illustrated its viability with examples from world art. In questions of art policy, too, he remained a realist.

Lunacharsky was a brilliant and original art critic; his literary activity assumed such wide scope after the October Revolution, and he wielded such great personal influence that he could hardly overlook the "socio-pedagogical" aspect of his relations with the artists of his day. As a member of the governing body of the country, he considered it his duty to protect the process of artistic development from coercive regulation, so deadly to the freedom artists need.

The complexity of the question of Lunacharsky's stand on the struggle between the different artistic trends was a reflection of the complexity of the actual situation in the world of art. It was a matter of complexity, not eclecticism or inconsistency.

In the controversy concerning the role and place of the fellow-travellers, of the peasant and proletarian writers in Soviet literature, and of the Party's position on the whole issue, Lunacharsky maintained a clear and consistent Leninist stand from the first to the last. Not in the contrivances or intentions of individuals, but in the existence of a huge petty-bourgeois and peasant population in Russia did he see the social origins of the fellow-travellers in literature. And al-

though the fellow-travellers made many mistakes, and here and there "went a-waltzing now to the right, now to the left with questionable dames", he was convinced that they were sincerely averse to the bourgeois system and were not opposed to the revolution. He pointed out that they were producing works of talent which helped one to understand what was happening among members of the petty-bourgeois and peasant strata, especially the contradictory process of their ideological development. Thus every such writer, especially if talented, should be treated with sympathy, given help, shown how to correct his mistakes. Besides, one could learn how to write from such writers!

As for the peasant writers, their work was also extremely important, said Lunacharsky, for they exerted a great influence on the peasantry, with whose life and psychology they were intimate. It was therefore necessary to rely on them too, while tactfully endeavouring to imbue them with the ideological and political programme of the proletariat. But their art should not be made to conform to some correct but abstract stereotype which would only impoverish their artistic palette.

As Education Commissar and art critic Lunacharsky took an entirely positive stand on the question of fostering proletarian literature. But he pointed out that the hegemony the proletarian writers sought had to be achieved by virtue of talent and the merits of their writings as proved in creative competition. The question of hegemony in the sphere of art should not be confused with the political hegemony of the proletarian class; that would be a very grave error, he said.

On June 18, 1925, the Political Bureau of the

Central Committee of the Party endorsed the draft resolution drawn up with Lunacharsky's immediate participation. Simultaneously the Political Bureau appointed a three-men committee (Bukharin, Lelevich and Lunacharsky) which was to prepare the final version of the resolution. Their final resolution was published on July 1.

So ended almost five months of work on the drafting of the resolution, and an almost three years' discussion of the policy of the Party in the sphere of literature.

Lunacharsky's contribution to the composition of that historic document, both by the active part he took in the public discussion of the question, and by the constructive proposals he made as a member of the committee (and as its chairman in the final stage of the work), was tremendous. His role in elaborating and shaping the Party's policy between 1917 and 1925 gave him every right to say in September, 1925: "Those who pay me high honour by speaking of a Lunacharsky policy are simply ignorant of our conditions of state activity. Of course, I implemented the policy that was being tested with and had the support of our central state and Party institutions. And that was the policy of the Soviet government." He was pleased to note the "absolute identity" of the ideas contained in the resolution and the line which the People's Commissariat for Education had consistently followed.

In his article "Concerning the Resolution of the Central Committee on Literary Policy", he dealt with those ideas and tendencies of the resolution which he considered the most important.

The general political principle underlying the resolution was that the proletariat was imple-

menting its class hegemony not by means of struggle with the other classes and social groups of the society of that day, but by "harmonizing" their interests; not by ousting those who thought differently or resorting to orders and government coercion, but by gaining the approval of the whole of society for its actions while retaining for itself the leading role. That was the basis on which relations with the fellow-travellers and peasant writers should rest.

The most important task in the sphere of literature was to encourage the development of the proletarian writers and critics. But they would have to gain hegemony and prove their right to it by writing good books and scholarly, interesting criticism. Only by a natural process of creative growth could they win the position they sought in the creative sphere.

The principal method of leadership in the sphere of literature was to treat it with the greatest care, interest and tact.

The tone of the resolution was conciliatory; its aim was to unite the whole literary world, an aim which precluded either "communist bluster" or capitulation. The first consisted in making communist reliability a good enough substitute for talent while regarding the absence of a definite political programme as a deadly sin and a flaw that negated the value of even a work of talent. The latter implied subservience to the old culture and a prejudiced denial of the artistic prospects of the young proletarian literature. The Central Committee's resolution on the policy of the Party in the literary sphere played a truly auspicious role in the development of Soviet literature.

The October Revolution gave rise to fundamentally new relations without precedent in history between art and the whole of social life. The Communist Party, the leading and guiding force of socialist construction on all fronts, thus had to work out its guidelines in the artistic sphere on the basis of the combined tactical and strategic tasks of socialist construction, the actual state of art of contemporary society and its role in ideology, education and social psychology. It was still at its 8th Congress when it pointed out the bearing of communist ideas on all forms of art. Chiefly by strengthening the ties of art with the life of the people and raising the cultural level of the masses who had received access to works of art and were learning to love and understand them could the general and the aesthetic outlook of artists themselves be shaped and new heights of artistic achievement be gained.

Lenin's policy on art (the basis of Lunacharsky's theoretical work and practical activity) was carried out primarily by means of the positive impact of the ideas of communism on writers. But, as the experience of the years 1917 to 1925 shows, the Party also employed organizational methods of leadership: by presenting its ideas and principles in the form of special decisions; by founding literary journals, publishing houses and all kinds of artists' associations, by the selection of personnel familiar with the field for government institutions concerned with art, by material aid to artists, and so on.

From the first days of the revolution, the Party led by Lenin charted a course of long and gradual promotion of the complicated process of the

critical assimilation of the old art and the simultaneous creation, on that basis, of the new art inspired by the idea of socialism.

The Leninist style of leadership in literature and art is characterized by concern for the richness and breadth of artistic creativity, by consideration for all the circumstances involved and for the complexity of the problem, by emphasis on the natural development of the artistic sphere, by ensuring the possibility of artistic search and rejecting artificial pressures and acceleration, by refraining from arbitrary methods of direction. That policy is a corollary of the tactful approach to artists of which we have spoken, of the desire to let artists express themselves.

By adhering to these principles, the Party was able to get its bearings in the artistic life of the 'twenties and perfect its policy. That policy amounted to a broad and principled platform of united effort by all writers who did not engage in counter-revolutionary activity and who later cooperated with the Soviet government. It was a policy that paved the way for the unfolding of all artistic talents.

The Party consistently opposed administrative bans in art and refrained from the limitation and standardization of artistic creation without relinquishing its fervent call for greater realism in art, its merciless struggle against counter-revolutionary sallies and its criticism of those currents and groups engendered by the decline of bourgeois culture.

Of great significance as well was the method followed by the Party in elaborating this policy. It was a far-reaching and unhurried method, a method of free and open public discussion by representatives of all groups and trends whether

in the press, in the form of debates, or in the course of the work of the commission which drew up the draft resolution of the Central Committee on Party policy in the sphere of literature. Thus one can justly say that the resolution summed up the thinking of the Party and the artistic world on the question.

The Party demonstrated concretely that fruitful leadership of the country's artistic life had to be based upon an objective scientific foundation and a differentiated approach to the efforts of the various artistic groups and individual artists. It meant avoiding hasty conclusions that oversimplified the real problems. In the first half of the 'twenties, the Party scored an important moral and political victory by proving in practice that Party leadership, far from limiting the writer's creative freedom, provided such freedom and made it an essential condition for the emergence of socialist art. By giving writers and their associations a big part in the drafting of the Party document, the Central Committee drew them into the direction of matters relating to art.

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Statesman, writer, philosopher, art critic, theoretician and historian—it hardly seems possible here to discuss in detail all sides of Lunacharsky's multiform and brilliant activity.

And yet we cannot take leave of him without mentioning his writings on the history of revolutionary philosophical thought: "Karl Marx. On the Centenary of His Birth, 1818-1918" (1918); "From Spinoza to Marx" (1925); "Baruch Spinoza and the Bourgeoisie (1933); his paper read at

the Oxford Philosophical Congress, his brilliant polemic with Benedetto Croce.

From his pen there flowed hundreds of articles and studies of world, Russian and Soviet literature, the fine arts, the theatre, music. In them we find the first correct evaluations of the works of many Soviet artists, art groups and trends in our country and in the West. His meetings with the artists of other countries did much to rally progressive intellectuals to the support of the young Soviet republic.

His articles and speeches, especially towards his last years, proved the most serious and important criticism of the works of Mayakovsky; even more important for the history of Soviet criticism were his numerous essays on Maxim Gorky.

Those last years of his life were particularly fruitful. It was then that he brought out a number of original works on methodological problems, including his "Theses on the Problems of Marxist Criticism" (1928), "Lenin and Literary Scholarship" (1932), his report to the Second Plenary Meeting of the Soviet Writers Organizational Committee in which he, one of the first to do so, defined the essence of socialist realism as a developing trend which would be enriched by the changing reality and draw its strength from the living experience of literature and art.

He did not realize the plans of his last years; he had wanted to write three books—on laughter, on wisdom, and on Lenin as hero and genius.

His enormous literary legacy embraces all spheres of the social sciences. Not everything in that legacy has endured, but much of it remains valuable and pertinent to our times.

In 1927, the Soviet Government made Luna-

charsky a member of its permanent delegation to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference. Litvinov was the chairman of that delegation and Lunacharsky its vice-chairman. His assignment to a diplomatic post did not come as a surprise: he had been prepared for it by years of work in the Council of People's Commissars, his knowledge of foreign languages, history, the culture and customs of many European countries (he also spent some time in Turkey), and finally by his prestige among intellectual circles in the West.

In 1929, he was released from his duties as People's Commissar for Education and appointed chairman of the Scientific Committee of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR.

His last appointment, as ambassador to Spain, with which the Soviet Union was about to establish diplomatic relations in 1933, was not fated to be filled. He died on December 26 of heart disease in Menton, a city in the south of France. His remains are interred in the Kremlin Wall in Moscow.

Anatoli Vasilevich Lunacharsky lived a fine, vivid, big and interesting life dedicated to the last breath to the great cause of the proletarian revolution, the Soviet people, socialist culture and art. "He generously scattered about handfuls of the priceless gifts with which he was infinitely endowed by nature," said the newspaper *Izvestia* in its announcement to the Soviet and world public of his death.

А. ЕРШОВ
А. ДИНАРСКИЙ
на основании закона
Цвета 20 коп.

